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**Guide to Emergency Preparedness for Natural Disasters**

Natural disasters and other crises can arise at any time, varying in type and intensity. While we hope such events never occur, preparation is essential to ensure safety and minimize potential hardships. Use this guide as a starting point and customize it to suit your specific circumstances as appropriate.

1. **Stay up to date.**

You and your guide will need to take extra precautions; carefully monitor news reports and other media channels to remain informed about which surrounding cities, towns, or neighborhoods may be impacted by a natural disaster. Your daily commute, routine, and even air quality may be significantly altered. Learn the geography of your area and notable landmarks that you can reference in place of a map and other inaccessible visual aids the media may use to illustrate danger zones. Research emergency procedures in place for people with disabilities in your community; sometimes additional support is available. What is the makeup of the notification system, evacuation plan, and shelter accessibility?

1. **Make a Plan.**

If local officials ask you to evacuate, it is crucial that you and your guide dog follow instructions. Identify a feasible evacuation strategy with a trusted family member or friend ahead of time, as paratransit and public transportation services may be suspended. Secure a list of emergency contacts both nearby and outside of your affected home area should anything happen to you or your guide requiring urgent care. Should you be separated for any reason, ensure your dog is always wearing an ID tag on their collar with your contact information, along with their rabies tag. Microchip information should be kept up to date with your current contact details as well. Emergency contact information, as well as other critical instructions for your health or care of your guide, can be recorded in your iPhone’s Health app for easy access. Notify your local first-responders that you have a guide dog and may require extra assistance.

1. **Know your rights.**

Under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), emergency response services and shelters operated by state and local government are required to accommodate you and your guide dog. You are not restricted to pet-friendly shelters or hotels. Additionally, you cannot be separated from your dog or forced to isolate away from others. Be prepared to explain your legal right to be accompanied by your guide dog should you be questioned by a first responder during evacuation. Only two questions can be asked:

* Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
* What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

1. **Build an emergency Kit.**

It is recommended to prepare a kit with at least seven days’ worth of supplies. You may need to adjust the contents based on the specific situation. Just as you prepare a kit for yourself, factor in the needs of your guide dog. The kit can be stored at home, but you may also consider keeping an additional kit at work. You should never rely on shelters to provide food and other supplies for your guide. Here are some essential items to include:

* + Food and Water: Store several days’ supply of food in air-tight, waterproof containers.
  + Portable Water and Food Bowls: Lightweight and collapsible options are ideal.
  + Pick-Up Bags and sanitization equipment: Ensure you have enough for the duration of the evacuation.
  + Medicine: Keep an extra supply of your dog’s regular medications in a waterproof container. Also, consider packing medications for common issues such as ear infections and diarrhea.
  + Dog First Aid Kit
  + Health and Rabies Certificates: Keep copies of these documents in a waterproof container.
  + Contact list: should you be separated from your dog or unable to care for them for any reason, include a list of trusted contacts and instructions, as well as contact information for Guiding Eyes for the Blind.
  + White cane: It may not be safe, healthy, or practical to ask your guide to actively work in certain conditions.
  + Set of Booties.
  + Tie-Down and Extra Leash.
  + Familiar Items: Include some of your dog’s favorite toys, treats, or bedding. Familiar items can help reduce stress during evacuations.

Regularly check the expiration dates of perishable items, such as food, water, and medications, in your emergency kit. If your dog’s food has been packed away in your kit for over a month, feed your dog from the kit’s supplies and restock it with fresh food.

A proactive approach can make all the difference when facing an urgent threat. Having a thorough plan in place and a well-stocked kit with supplies enables you to prepare the best you can for unexpected challenges that impact you and your guide dog. You can find additional resources from the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](https://www.fema.gov/cbrn-tools/key-planning-factors-bio/kpf-4/4) (FEMA), [ADA National Network](https://adata.org/service-animal-resource-hub/emergencies), the [Center for Disease Control](https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-pets/emergency-preparedness/index.html) (CDC), [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov/pets), or the Guiding Eyes for the Blind [Graduate Center](https://www.guidingeyes.org/graduate-center/) . If you need further assistance or have questions about emergency readiness, the Guiding Eyes for the Blind Client Experience Team can be reached at [clientexperience@guidingeyes.org](mailto:clientexperience@guidingeyes.org) or 888-987-2188. Stay safe, prepared, and know that support is always available.