Emergency Guidelines for People With Disabilities

Center for Persons With Disabilities
EMERGENCY GUIDELINES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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In this season of wildfires and power outages due to severe weather across the nation, it is a good time to consider the unique needs of people with a wide range of physical and cognitive disabilities in emergency situations.

The University of Mexico has developed a set of Tip Sheets for First Responders in response to requests from first responders who wanted quick, easy-to-understand guidance on how to effectively work with people with disabilities during an emergency.

The Tip Sheets give specific guidelines for how to work with people with mobility impairments, autism, cognitive impairments, sensory impairments, seizures, and other disabilities during emergency situations. They have been successfully used in a number of situations:

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, medical personnel, law enforcement officers, National Guardsmen and other first responders in the Gulf States used information in the Tip Sheets to help evacuate people with disabilities who had been stranded in their homes.

In North Dakota, school health nurses used the Tip Sheets to work with students with intellectual disabilities who were being evacuated during unprecedented floods that swept the state.

The laminated, color-coded Tip Sheets are ring-bound so they can be hung from hooks in emergency vehicles, duty stations, school health offices, and taken into the field. They are a great tool for those who will work directly with the people in their communities to bring them to safety.

There are many different emergency planning tools and resources available to help guide those who work with people with disabilities. Planning ahead for emergency situations will help to ensure the safety of all people in the community, especially those who have unique needs due to a disability.