

Planning for People with Special Needs

Anyone who has a disability, or anyone who is involved in the care of a disabled person, should contact their local Emergency Medical Services provider (i.e., fire department and/or rescue squad) to advise them of the persons' location and potential needs during a weather related emergency.

The state's 9-1-1 emergency system enables people with special needs to register their disability into the system, therefore enabling emergency responders to better assist them when a 9-1-1 call comes in. Complete and submit the **Disability Indicator Form** located at www.state.ma.us/e911/info.htm.

PREPAREDNESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Anyone who has a disability, or anyone who is involved in the care of a disabled person, should obtain and use the following publication to develop a personal disaster plan NOW:

Disaster Preparedness for People with Disabilities by the American Red Cross, Disaster Services

This guide is designed to help people who have physical, visual, auditory, or cognitive disabilities to prepare for natural disasters and their consequences. **To obtain a copy of this publication, contact the American Red Cross, Cape Cod Chapter at (508) 775-1540.**

PREPAREDNESS FOR PEOPLE WITH BREATHING PROBLEMS

The American Lung Association urges everyone with a breathing problem to develop a personal hurricane plan NOW. Do not wait until the next storm event is predicted or upon us. Take the following information to your physician before finalizing your personal plan and always be guided by his or her advice.

In most cases, unless you live in a hurricane evacuation area, it is best for

you to ensure that your home is protected and remain there with a friend or family member. If you cannot stay in your own home, stay with family or friends in a protected home. Shelters are crowded and uncomfortable and will not have air conditioning or other services if electrical power is interrupted and no generator is on site. Go to a shelter ONLY as a last resort. Remember that hospitals are reserved as the place to treat injuries and life threatening situations.

Before Hurricane Season

At your next physician appointment discuss hurricane preparedness and ask for specific recommendations. Ask the following questions:

- How often can I take a breathing treatment if I get short of breath?
- Should I keep a two-week supply of all medications on hand?
- If my condition changes, when should I go to a hospital?
- What procedure should I follow and what hospital should I go to?
- How should I get there?
- What about taking breathing treatments if the electricity fails? Possible options include:
 1. Substituting a metered-dose inhaler for treatment.
 2. Purchasing a portable battery operated nebulizer.
 3. Buying a DC inverter. (These inverters may be ordered from electronics stores. Before purchasing an inverter, check with your medical equipment vendor to assure

compatibility of the inverter with your specific nebulizer and ask about the safety precautions.)

If you use oxygen at home

If you use oxygen, call your medical supply vendor now and ask for information on services they will provide in the event of a hurricane and/or power failure. Remember that oxygen should always be kept at least 10 feet from any open flame. **Some questions to ask the medical supply vendor include:**

- Will my full oxygen backup last at least 48 hours? If you do not have a backup cylinder, ask for one.
- Will you deliver additional oxygen cylinders in threatening weather?
- How should I store oxygen cylinders?
- What supplies will I need for cleaning respiratory equipment? Request a written procedure for cleaning the equipment.
- What is your plan to replenish my oxygen supply after the storm?

Ventilators

Patients using a ventilator should speak with their physician and medical supply vendor about obtaining a backup battery in case of a power failure during or following the storm.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING YOUR PERSONAL PLAN...

If dependent on oxygen therapy?

Contact your local Emergency Medical Services provider to give notice of your potential needs prior to an actual incident.

Should I stay home or go somewhere else?

- Inform local emergency officials, family members and close friends of your decision to relocate.

- ❑ Prepare contact information for emergency officials to assist them in the event they receive inquiries as to your well being.
- ❑ If relocation to a shelter is your only option you **MUST** plan to relocate **EARLY!** Contact your local Emergency Medical Services provider so they may prepare for your arrival, and assist in transportation if necessary.

PRACTICAL POINTS

It is most important that you **REMAIN CALM**. Emotional stress increases your heart rate, quickens breathing, makes breathing more difficult and demands more oxygen from the body.

1. Use only battery powered lights. Do not use candles or open flames for any reason around oxygen equipment.

2. Practice pursed-lip breathing, diaphragmatic breathing and conditioning exercises to help you breathe easier.
3. Assemble and check your survival kit. In addition to the items recommended for a **Disaster Kit on pages 8 and 9**, you should keep the following:
 - ❑ **14-day supply of medications**
 - ❑ **Small cooler with frozen gel packs**
 - ❑ **Supplies for cleaning respiratory equipment** including vinegar, water, liquid detergent, a dish pan and paper towels
 - ❑ **Backup oxygen cylinder**

- ❑ Keep **important papers** such as your medical identification cards, physician's name and phone number, and other vital information in a handy place. Put important papers in waterproof containers.

Sources:
Harwich Fire Department;
www.lungusa.org;
www.stluciecountyhealth.com/emergency/breathing-probs.htm



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