

# **ALS Emergency Preparedness**

*The ALS Association Greater New York Chapter*  
*www.als-ny.org*

## **Tips For People With Communication Disabilities Communication**

Determine how you will communicate with emergency personnel if you do not have your communication devices (augmentative communication device, word board, artificial larynx).

### **Communication Aids**

Store paper, writing materials, and copies of a word or letter board and preprinted key phrases specific to anticipated emergencies in all your emergency kits, your wallet, purse, etc.

### **Emergency Health Information Card**

Make sure your emergency health information card explains the best method of communication for you (written notes, pointing to letters/words/pictures, finding a quiet place).

### **Alternate Power Source**

Obtain an alternative power source (power converter, batteries) if you use a computer or laptop as a means of frequent communication

## **Checklist**

\_\_\_\_\_ Determine your ideal method of communication in the event of an emergency and be prepared to use it.

\_\_\_\_\_ Store communication aids in all of your emergency kits.

\_\_\_\_\_ Make an emergency health information card and be sure to include your communication needs.

\_\_\_\_\_ Store batteries or chargers for communication equipment

## **Tips For People With Life-Support Systems**

### **Secure Equipment**

Secure your life-support equipment to prevent damage from falling. If you use a chain, make sure it is welded (not bent)

### **Alternate Providers**

Determine which facilities/providers can serve you if your home system becomes inoperable or your current provider is unable to assist you.

### **Alternate Power**

Ask your vendor about alternative power sources that will sustain you for up to seven days.

Could you use manually-operated equipment?

Can your equipment be powered from a vehicle battery? If yes, obtain any hardware necessary for the hook-up.

**Generators** For all-day use over several days, a gasoline-powered **generator** is the preferred alternative power source. Test it periodically and operate it only in an open area to ensure good ventilation. If you store an adequate gasoline supply, make sure you do so safely. Keep a siphon kit on hand in case you need to obtain gasoline directly from your vehicle.

Some generators can be plugged into house wiring systems.

**Consult your utility company before you do this.**

### **Utility Company Registry**

Many utility companies keep a list of names of people dependent on life-support systems and tag their meters. Registering for this service may qualify you for a discount rate; contact the customer service department for more information.

### ***Never count on your power being quickly restored***

*Utility personnel may not be able to reach you right away after a major disaster.*

## **Tips For People With Life-Support Systems - Part 2**

### **Oxygen Users**

- Ask your provider if a reduced-flow rate may be used during a disaster to prolong the life of the system.
- Record on your equipment the reduced flow numbers so you can refer to them.
- Be aware of oxygen safety; avoid areas where gas leaks or open flames may be present.
- Post "Oxygen in Use" signs.
- Keep the shut-off switch for oxygen equipment near you so you can get to it quickly in an emergency.

### **Test Backups Regularly**

- If your backup power system relies on batteries, be aware that stored batteries require periodic charging, even if they are unused. A charging routine must be strictly followed.
- Test your alternative power equipment regularly to ensure it will function in an emergency.
- Know the working duration of any batteries that support your system
- Ask your power company about the type of backup power you plan to use and get their advice.

### **Utility Company Registry (Repeat)**

- Many utility companies keep a list of names of people dependent on life-support systems and tag their meters.
- Registering for this service may qualify you for a discount rate; contact the customer service department for more information.

### ***Never count on your power being quickly restored***

- *Utility personnel may not be able to reach you right away after a major disaster.*

## **Tips For People With Mobility Concerns**

### **Storage**

- Store emergency supplies in a pack or backpack attached to your walker, wheelchair or scooter.
- Store needed mobility aids (canes, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs)

close to you in a consistent, convenient and secured location.

- Keep extra aids in several locations, if available.

### **Emergency Kit**

- Keep a pair of heavy gloves in your supply kit to use while making your way over glass and debris.
- If you use a motorized wheelchair or scooter, consider having an extra battery available. A car battery can be substituted, however, it will not last as long as a wheelchair's deep-cycle battery.
- Ask your vendor if you can recharge your batteries (in the event of a power outage) by connecting jumper cables to a vehicle battery or using a special converter that plugs into your vehicle's cigarette lighter.
- If you do not have puncture-proof tires, keep a patch kit or can of "seal-in-air" to repair flat tires and/or keep an extra supply of inner tubes.
- Store a lightweight, manual wheelchair if available.

### **Evacuation Plan for People in Wheelchairs**

- Arrange and secure furniture and other items to create barrier-free passages in your home and office.
- If you spend time above the first floor of an elevator building, plan and practice using alternate methods of evacuation. If needed, enlist the help of your **personal support network**.
- There will be instances where wheelchair users will have to leave their chairs behind in order to evacuate safely.
- If you cannot use stairs, familiarize yourself with lifting and carrying techniques that will work for you.
- Alert rescue personnel to any areas of vulnerability • For example, the traditional "fire fighter's carry" may be hazardous for people with respiratory weakness.
- You need to be able to give brief instructions regarding how to move you.

### **Have a “go” bag**

- Can be used for evacuation or in the event of unexpectedly going to the hospital.
- Medications and list of meds • Health form • Copies of insurance cards
- Communication board

- Liquid nutrition/feeding tube supplies
- Glasses • Cash/travelers checks
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container.
- Call bell

### **Home Safety—Fire and Natural Disasters**

- Call your local fire department and report to them that a disabled person resides in your home.
- In the event of an emergency, the 911 system would have a “disability notice” that would alert the responders that a person living at that residence either moves slowly, cannot get out of the house unassisted, or is confined to a second (or higher) floor of the house.
- Ask your local fire department if they have any personnel or volunteers that could come to your home to work with them and their family on an evacuation plan in the event of an emergency.
- Stress the importance of smoke detectors (and carbon monoxide detectors).
- Have an evacuation plan for not only in the event of a fire, but also a natural weather emergency.