

With the help of renowned emergency preparedness expert Dennis Debbaudt, who has a son with autism, and ASA Board Member Ruth Elaine Hane, the Autism Society of America (ASA)—with support from NASCAR driver and ASA friend Jamie McMurray—is committed to helping families with special needs prepare for emergencies.

During any emergency, whether it be weather-related or man-made, we want those in the autism community to be prepared to weather the storm both before it hits and in the aftermath.

Should you have access to a video recorder or camera, it is strongly recommended that you videotape your property and important possessions. Then, send copies of those photos or videos to a friend or family member in another location for safe keeping.



TIP #1. PRACTICE CALM

Parents and care providers need to project a demeanor of calm during a disaster or emergency, even if we're not! Children and adults on the spectrum may sense your emotional state—and mimic it. Practice for and prepare to project a sense of calm.



TIP #2. PREPARE FOR IMMEDIATE NEEDS BEFORE DISASTER

- Be ready to evacuate. Have a plan for getting you and your loved ones out of your home or building (*ask family or friends for assistance, if necessary*). Also, plan two evacuation routes because some roads may be closed or blocked in a disaster.
- Create a self-help network of relatives, friends or co-workers to assist in an emergency.
- If you think you may need assistance in a disaster, discuss your disability with relatives, friends, and co-workers and ask for their help.
- Give a key to a neighbor or friend who may be able to assist you in a disaster.
- Contact your local emergency information management office now. (*Many local emergency management offices maintain registers of people with disabilities so they can be located and assisted quickly in a disaster.*)
- Wearing a medical alert tag or bracelet to identify your disability may help in case of an emergency.
- If you have a severe speech, language, or hearing disability:
 1. When you dial 911, tap space bar to indicate tdD call.
 2. Store a writing pad and pencils to communicate with others.
 3. Keep a flashlight handy to signal whereabouts to other people and for illumination to aid in communication.
 4. Remind friends that you cannot completely hear warnings or emergency instructions. Ask them to be your source of emergency information as it comes over their radio.
 5. If you have a hearing ear dog, be aware that the dog may become confused or disoriented in an emergency. Store extra food, water and supplies for your dog.

- Consider your pets and plan to take care of them in advance, particularly if sheltering is necessary, so you can concentrate on the rest of the family as danger approaches.
- Have a disaster supplies kit on hand you can use these at home or in an evacuation setting. Kits should include:
 1. Flashlight with extra batteries
 2. Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries
 3. First aid kit and manual
 4. Emergency food and water for at least two days (*per person*)
 5. Manual can opener
 6. Essential medicines
 7. Cash and credit cards (*be sure to withdraw cash in advance*)
 8. Sturdy shoes
- Also, in case of evacuation, pack a safety & comfort kit, which can include:
 1. Blanket
 2. Pillow
 3. Folding chair
 4. Sleeping bag or cot
 5. Food and water for at least two days
 6. Medication for three to seven days
 7. Personal hygiene items
 8. Identification and valuable documents (*insurance, birth and marriage certificates, and special-needs forms*)
 9. Battery-operated radio
 10. Flashlight
 11. Batteries
 12. Change of clothes
 13. "Comfort" items such as CD players and CDs (*with extra batteries*) or DVD player and DVDs
 14. Ear plugs or eye shades
 15. Storage boxes to store small items, could be plastic with lids
 16. A drawing of the building layout and map of the area to give an orientation of where you are in relation to your home.
 17. An ID bracelet and autism information cards to explain behaviors to others.

Some of these helpful tips are provided in part by FEMA's report, "Disaster Preparedness for People with Disabilities," and the *Baltimore Sun Sentinel*. To view the FEMA report in its entirety, go to www.fema.gov/library/disprep.shtm.



TIP #3.

PREPARE FOR NEEDS IN YOUR HOME NOW SO THAT YOU'LL BE READY AFTER DISASTER STRIKES

- Look for items that may have broken or been displaced that could cause a hazard, particularly electrical lines.
- Beware of carbon monoxide poisoning. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) send this warning: "Preliminary reports indicate that people in states affected by Hurricane Katrina have died or been poisoned by carbon monoxide. An urgent health recommendation that should be broadly distributed is to never use generators, grills, camp stoves, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas, or charcoal-burning devices inside the home, basement, garage, or camper—or even outside near an open window."
- Follow instructions for disaster supplies kit and the safety & comfort kit outlined in Tip #2.

ADDITIONAL HURRICANE AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS WEB SITES:

- FEMA Hurricane and general disaster home page: www.fema.gov/hazards/hurricanes
- NOAA: www.aoml.noaa.gov/hrd/links.html
- American Red Cross: www.redcross.org
- Centers for Disease Control, with respect to serious concerns for carbon monoxide poisoning: www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/carbon_monoxide.asp



In partnership with the Autism Society of America, these Disaster Preparedness Tips are brought to you by NASCAR's #42 Jamie McMurray. We are committed to keeping you and your family "Safe and Sound."