

# **Emergency Planning for CILS: For Your Organization**



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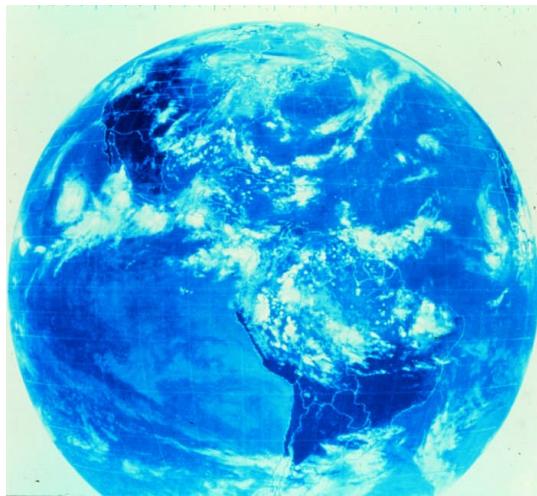
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# **EMERGENCY PLANNING FOR CILS: FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION**



(Photo of a two tone blue world with white hot spots showing storms,  
courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

## **Introduction**

Recent disasters have shown that many local, state and federal agencies are inadequately prepared for assisting people with disabilities in evacuation, sheltering and recovery efforts. This emergency planning guidebook was written to help Centers for Independent Living (CILs) plan for, deal with, and recuperate from unexpected disastrous events or emergencies that may cause harm to CIL staff and the people they serve. These events may also cause damage to buildings and interrupt CIL operations.

This guidebook focuses on how to prepare *before*, cope *during* and recover *after* a disastrous event. Instruction is provided on how to protect your staff, board members and consumers, as well as your agency records, computers and building. This guidebook fills the gap that other materials do not cover. It advises you about individual preparation – the ways in which your staff and the consumers you serve can get ready for an emergency. Because there are already many emergency preparedness manuals and websites about preparing people with disabilities for emergencies, we have referenced those materials instead of recreating them here.

This guidebook includes specific information about the important role a CIL can play in preparing staff and individuals with disabilities for disaster. It recognizes the unique role of a CIL as a community-based organization that has a wealth of knowledge and a strong commitment to address the concerns of people with disabilities. A second guidebook in this series focuses on your community -- how your CIL can work with the broader community to assist people with disabilities in emergencies. In that guidebook, CILs are encouraged to participate in the planning process and coordinate services with disaster planning agencies, individuals with disabilities, and other disability-related organizations.

## **Emergency Preparedness and Recovery for CILs**



*The Northern Lakes Center was shut down for a month after a tornado struck.*

*The roof was torn off the building, computers were destroyed and most of the staff were left homeless.*

(Photo of a residential area devastated by a hurricane is courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

### **Section I: Agency Preparation**

#### ***Everyone should participate in emergency planning***

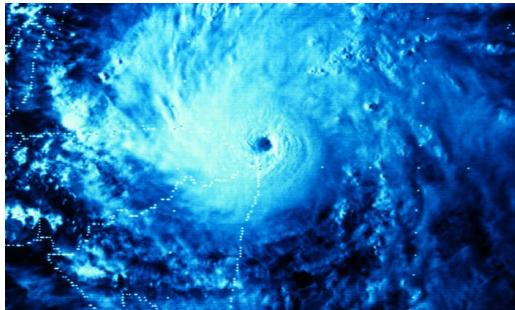
Your CIL must plan for its own organizational survival. Board members, managers and other staff members should collaboratively develop an organizational survival plan. Each board member, staff person and consumer should play a part in creating an emergency plan. It is especially important to have leadership from the director and board members. The more people that are involved, the more comprehensive the identified issues and their plans for resolution will be, and the greater the likelihood of success when the time comes to implement the emergency plan.

#### ***Get started now***

Conduct a board/staff retreat or dedicate an entire staff meeting to emergency planning. Designate a month as “emergency planning month.” Identify someone who will get the ball rolling. The important thing is to start the discussion now and identify the planning steps you need to take. Review the emergency preparedness checklist in Appendix I located at the end of this guidebook. It will help you to think about the issues that your CIL should address.

#### ***Designate a team***

Designate individuals to be on the emergency coordination team. You will want to include at least one board member. Assign one person to be the primary emergency coordinator and another person as the secondary coordinator. In addition to people in your own organization, identify neighboring businesses, building managers and/or other partner agencies to serve on your emergency coordination team. You will need enough people to be responsible for each of the major areas of your plan. Review the checklist in Appendix I at the end of this guidebook and assign responsibilities for completing each section.



*Southern State CIL staff were evacuated due to an impending hurricane. All staff had been trained on the emergency communications plan, which advised employees to call the Capitol City CIL if phone communications were down to learn when the Center would re-open.*

(Photo of an aerial view of the eye and swirling clouds of a hurricane, courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

Assess the skills of your staff related to emergency response training. Find out if anyone has completed CPR, First Aid, or CERT training. Encourage any employees who are interested in receiving additional training to do so by offering to pay the cost of the training or certification fees. The American Red Cross will train staff on-site as a team in many areas.

Use the internet to locate the emergency management agency for your area. Go to Google or another search tool, and type in “emergency preparedness <name of your city or region>”.

### ***Write up your organization’s emergency response plan***

To get started, ask a member of the emergency coordination team, a board member or a volunteer to draft an initial emergency response plan using the checklist in Appendix I as a guide. Key staff and other team members can then review it and fill in the blanks. Circulate copies of your emergency response plan to board members, staff, and community members. Input from others concerned with the CIL is critical. Once you have a written plan, it can be the basis for training. Periodic review and updating of the plan is essential as staff and board members change. The remainder of this guidebook will help you with your preparation.

### ***Identify potential emergencies***

Research the history of previous emergencies in your community. Have there ever been emergencies in your building? What lessons can you learn from these? Identify potential emergencies based on where your CIL is geographically located – in a flood plain, near airports, or seismic faults. Emergencies can be either natural or man-made. Contact the emergency management agency for your area. They will be able to tell you which emergencies are likely to occur and the local resources that are available locally to assist in your planning. Examples of potential emergencies may include the following:

(Photo of a helicopter dropping water on trees, courtesy of the National Park Service)

1. Fire/wild fire
2. Flood
3. Hurricane
4. Earthquake
5. Electricity outage
6. Tornado
7. Toxic spill
8. Hostage situation
9. Bombing





*Tri-Parish CIL was flooded in the aftermath of Katrina. The agency's computers were underwater for a week. All of the organization's consumer records and financial records were destroyed.*

In planning for potential emergencies, consider what you will do if your CIL facility is not useable. Consider whether you can run your CIL operations from a different location or from the homes of staffers. Develop relationships with other organizations, including those in other communities, to use their facilities in case a disaster makes your location unusable.

(Photo of rows of house rooftops surrounded by flood water after Katrina, courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

### **Plan for communications**

Two-way communication is essential before, during and after a disaster. Figure out how your CIL will communicate with employees, consumers and local authorities during and after a disaster. One of the best methods of assuring your agency's recovery is to provide for your employees' well-being. Communicate regularly with employees before, during and after an incident.



*Employees from several Louisiana CILs were evacuated to other regions after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. These employees had no way of communicating their whereabouts for weeks. Those remaining were very distressed by not knowing what had happened to their co-workers.*

(Photo of large broken trees in front of a house and building devastation, courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

1. Use newsletters, intranets, email, staff meetings and other internal communications tools to communicate emergency plans and procedures. Post your agency's emergency plan on a bulletin board and/or on your website where all can view it.
2. Set up procedures to warn employees. Plan how you will communicate with people who are hearing-impaired or have other disabilities and/or who do not speak English.
3. Consider setting up a telephone calling tree, password-protected page on your website, email alert, or call-in voice recording to communicate with employees and consumers in an emergency.

4. Designate an out-of-town phone number where employees can leave an "I'm Okay and here's where I am or can be reached" message in a catastrophic disaster. Remind them to minimize their calls and keep them short so others can get through.
5. Keep a record of employee emergency contact information with other important documents in your agency emergency kit and at an off-site location.
6. If you rent, lease or share space with other businesses, it is important to communicate, share and coordinate evacuation procedures and other emergency plans.



*The New Orleans CIL office space was unusable for nine months after the broken levees flooded the city.*

*Many staff from the Louisiana CILs were unaccounted for several days-- increasing the concern of other staff for their safety and well-being. Not knowing if co-workers and their families were safe was very difficult emotionally.*

(Photo of a city mailbox plastered with flyers of missing persons, courtesy of the Library of Congress)

### ***Plan for staff with disabilities***

Plan for the assistance that employees with disabilities may need in an emergency. Each person should have his or her own emergency plan that addresses communication and mobility needs, assistive technology, and medications. Plan how you will alert people who cannot hear an alarm or instructions. Plan for how you will assist individuals with mobility impairments to evacuate if you are in a multi-story building.

### ***Acquire emergency supplies for the CIL***

When preparing for emergency situations, it's best to think first about the basics of survival: fresh water, food, clean air and warmth. Plan to collect at least enough emergency supplies that are adequate to cover the number of people who use the CIL on a typical day.

**72-hour kit.** An adequate supply of fresh water for drinking and washing is recommended. Dried or canned food storage is needed in case you have to shelter in place. For cold weather climates, store blankets to protect against the cold. Encourage everyone to have their own portable emergency kit customized to meet their personal needs, including essential medications. Decide with your staff which emergency supplies the CIL can feasibly provide, and which supplies individuals should consider keeping on hand.

## **Radios**

It is recommended that you have both a battery-powered commercial radio and a NOAA weather radio with an alert function. (NOAA is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – the official weather forecaster for the U.S. government. More information can be located at: [www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr). Commercial radio is a good source for news and information from local authorities.



*An NOAA weather radio announces emergencies in your area. It is silent until an emergency is declared, at which time the radio sounds an alarm and broadcasts a spoken message concerning the emergency. You may buy attachments with strobe lights and vibrators for people who cannot hear the alarm or voice message. Some models display test messages. A NOAA radio is left on at all times.*

*(Photo of a blue and white NOAA emergency radio)*

## **Store agency records**

Keep copies of important records in portable containers that are waterproof and fireproof. Store a second set of records at an off-site location. Another option is to have these documents scanned and then stored on a disk. In terms of preparing for any emergency, it would be best to have physical copies of records as well as electronic ones. Redundancy is important. Records stored on site (either paper or electronic) could be damaged during the actual emergency or in transit during an evacuation. Important items you should maintain in a safe place include:

- Insurance policies
- Articles of incorporation, by-laws, and other legal documents
- Employee contact and identification information
- Bank account records
- Contracts and other legal agreements
- Provider contact lists
- Computer backups
- Emergency and/or law enforcement contact information
- Site maps and building plans
- Consumer lists (newsletter)
- Accounting records and audit reports

## **Plan for office computers and equipment**

Communication equipment and computers are central to the operations of all organizations. Consider the various functions that you could perform from an alternate location. Consider the use of portable computers and portable storage devices and/or make arrangements for the offsite storage of electronic information so that you can retrieve the information and use it on computers in other locations. Plan ahead for another location, perhaps in another geographic area, where you can either move your computers or have access to computers at that location.

(Photo of a man typing at a computer, courtesy of the Center for Persons with Disabilities, Utah State University)



### **Back up electronic records**

You should have a system of regular back-ups for all your vital computer records. Daily, weekly and monthly back-ups are recommended. Assign an employee (and an alternate for when that employee is absent) to

be responsible for copying all of your vital electronic records onto back-up storage media, such as CDs, tape drives, memory sticks, or whatever you have. Plan for where you will keep these back-up media safe. Back-up copies should be kept at a different location, away from the main CIL. Consider using internet-based electronic storage on servers located outside your local area.

Off site web-based data storage has significant advantages. Often disasters strike unexpectedly and it may be difficult or impossible to retrieve even the most portable data storage devices. Those devices can be damaged in transit or damaged in an emergency by water, wind, debris, cold, or heat. These remain an acceptable safety backup, but off site storage offers greater security, as long as backups are made frequently and regularly.

Ensure that you have back-up copies of the following electronic records:

- Financial data files
- Financial accounting software (e.g., Quickbooks)
- Employee data files
- Employee records software program
- Consumer data files
- Consumer records software program
- Electronic correspondence files
- Other key electronic data and software

Planning for how you will pay employees in a disaster will be crucial, both for the well-being of your staff and for your organization's ability to continue operations. This involves CIL and employee banking arrangements, writing payroll checks, and acquiring the necessary authorizations while maintaining appropriate financial controls. This may be one of the more complicated issues you face and will require

advance planning and assistance from bankers, your accountant, and perhaps an outside payroll service. For those employees who have bank accounts, electronic funds transfer may be one of the better ways of ensuring an employee's pay is deposited and available to the employee, although such arrangements must be made well in advance. It's important to emphasize again that payroll arrangements will require careful advance planning.



*CIL directors identified several practical issues they encountered after Katrina and Rita:*

*Handling payroll,*

*Maintaining databases, and*

*Managing immediately after the disaster.  
CIL Recovery Retreat, December 2005*

(Photo of a woman crouched down using a calculator with receipts on boxes, courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

### ***Provide ongoing training***

In order for staff to learn and follow the procedures that you have planned during a *real* emergency, conduct short relevant training activities on a periodic basis. You may have new staff on board who were not involved in the initial planning activities. Everyone needs periodic refresher training on the emergency plan. You should link the training workshops to actual activities and use the results of the training activities to revise and clarify the plan. Use table-top exercises (discussed in the following sections) and conduct unannounced drills to ensure that the plan works. You will want to ensure the continual buy-in of all staff.

## Section II: Individual Preparation



*According to a 2001 National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.)/Harris poll, 61% of people with disabilities had not made plans to quickly and safely evacuate their homes and 58% did not know whom to contact about emergency plans in their community.*

(Photo of a fairly large boat resting at an angle on top of smashed trees, courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

It is critical for all people, especially those with disabilities, to prepare themselves for emergency situations. Emergency planners advise people to be self-sufficient for at least three days without outside help or emergency services (preparenow.org). Your CIL can play an important role in helping staff and the individuals you serve take responsibility for their own personal preparation. In your training it is important to emphasize the individual responsibility of people with disabilities to advocate for themselves. The CIL can provide training that will assist individuals to identify issues during evacuation, sheltering and recovery. People with disabilities should be educated to understand that CIL staff cannot be with them at all times so it will be primarily up to them to advocate for themselves.

Before you can help people to create an emergency response plan, they need to understand the importance of being prepared and the problems they may face, including a possible lack of communications. Recent natural and man made disasters have shown the limited ability of local, state, and national emergency resources to respond quickly to all of the individuals impacted by these disasters, including individuals with disabilities.



*Brad S. is deaf and could see pictures of the fires on TV, but did not realize he was in danger. When the evacuation warnings were issued on television, they were not captioned. He did not leave his home until the fires were dangerously close. Brad relies on specialized medication to control seizures and did not have prescriptions or a supply with him. He began to have seizures after three days of living in the shelter. California Wildfires, 2003*

(Photo of burning trees with smoke and flames, courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

Because of this reality, it is very important that your CIL becomes involved in assisting individuals, staff, and community members to prepare for disasters. If your CIL employees are prepared themselves, they will be more effective in helping others to prepare, and in assisting the wider community during an emergency. In addition,

your CIL may be the first place an individual with a disability contacts for information about emergency plans in your community. The following sections will give you ideas of where to start and how your CIL can help community members begin to prepare.

### ***Where to start***



This section is designed to give you ideas on what your CIL can do to help individuals better prepare for emergencies. By conducting preparation activities and training that reviews various emergency scenarios, your CIL will provide an important service for staff and consumers.

(Photo of a fire and rescue sticker with a wheelchair symbol on a window)

### ***Activities to educate individuals on the importance of preparedness***

Try to generate interest and awareness on the importance of emergency preparation for every individual. Point out the reasons why people should be prepared. Find out which activities individuals have already done to develop their own emergency response plan. Encourage them to get started, if necessary. Your CIL can support individuals to effectively prepare themselves for emergencies.

Here are some specific activities to help you educate people:

1. Assign a staff member(s) to coordinate the collection, development, and distribution of emergency preparedness materials.
2. Use existing emergency preparedness educational materials (adapt the material as needed and appropriate) and/or develop your own community specific material. Distribute the information through email, newsletters, fact sheets, posters, manuals and websites within your community. (See Additional Resources section at the end of this guidebook for information on how to access existing material).
3. Expand your CIL's existing information and resource library to include emergency preparedness information that staff and community members can easily access.
4. Create a brochure specifically for your town, city, or area that lists emergency planning tasks and supports for individuals. Publicize this information in the community. (See next section for specific activities that may be included).

### ***Sponsor group planning activities***

There are additional activities that your CIL can sponsor to facilitate individual emergency planning beyond a general educational approach. These activities will

take staff time and resources. You must balance your emergency preparedness activities with the rest of the many functions that your CIL plays in the community. One way to do this is to incorporate emergency preparedness activities into the services and supports that your CIL already provides.



*For example, one CIL has decided to prepare a binder of emergency preparedness materials and a basic survival kit, which includes a flashlight, bottled water, energy bars, and an emergency blanket, to be given to all individuals who complete a new intake with the CIL.*

(Photo of a woman in a wheelchair at a desk covered with papers talking to another, courtesy of ILRU)

Emergency planning may focus on your area's specific hazards, as well as a general approach to all hazards. Consider the prior history of emergencies and other unique aspects of your community. The following list provides examples of specific activities your CIL may want to sponsor:

1. Develop individual emergency response binders or folders for staff and community members. Include disaster and disability specific tip sheets and appropriate planning checklists to assist individuals in creating a comprehensive and individualized plan. (See the Additional Resources section for information on where to get tip sheets and appropriate checklists).
2. Hold workshops where participants can identify tasks and compile their "to do" lists for their individual emergency plans. These workshops should help individuals in small groups complete their planning checklists.
3. Host a community emergency preparedness fair/workshop or sponsor a disability related booth at existing community emergency preparedness events.
4. Host discussion groups that discuss disability specific needs in an emergency, such as power-dependent equipment, cell phones, PAS, service animals, or durable medical equipment.



*Joan B. learned that wildfires were approaching her home in rural southern California, but her cell phone battery was not charged, and she was unable to contact help. When Joan was at last evacuated by neighbors, she had to leave her power wheelchair at home. At the shelter she was restricted to a cot until volunteers could carry her to the restroom when needed. - California Wildfires, 2003*

(photo of large bright flames burning up trees courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

5. Host CIL workshops to discuss local emergency response resources, display available emergency planning materials, and demonstrate how to find information on the internet.
6. Hold a workshop to assemble basic disaster survival kits.

### ***Support individuals with planning***

1. Help individuals complete a medical history form to keep with important papers that will be taken with the individual during an evacuation.
2. Assist individuals in collecting and making copies of important documents. Demonstrating secure ways of storing this information, both in hard copy and electronically.
3. Discuss how individuals can work with their doctors or pharmacists to ensure that they have enough medication on hand (at least a seven-day supply) that is kept with the person at all times.
4. Provide ongoing support to individuals that need it as they continue to work on their personal preparation checklists and plans.



*One planning activity may be to assist people to complete a personal assessment of what they will need to take with them in the case of emergency evacuation or what they need to have in their residence if they have to shelter in place for at least three days.*

(Photo of a man standing in front of a whiteboard talking to four others, one in a wheelchair, courtesy of the Center for Persons with Disabilities, Utah State University)

### ***Content of emergency preparedness training***

The role of the CIL is to help individuals with disabilities anticipate the problems and barriers they might experience if they must be evacuated and/or go to a shelter. Emergency workers may not know how to handle concerns about personal assistance, mobility, communication, assistive technology, medications, or service animals. Therefore, individual with disabilities must be prepared to advocate for what they need. Part of the content of emergency preparedness training is to help people recognize the issues that will crop up if they must evacuate their home and stay overnight or longer in a shelter. Therefore, as you develop the trainings, try to anticipate and discuss those issues that may arise in evacuation and sheltering.

The CIL can help individuals with disabilities plan and prepare by discussing a variety of possible scenarios. Ideally, prior to the emergency, the CIL and people with disabilities have been part of their community planning and emergency personnel recognize the expertise available from CIL staff. If this collaboration hasn't occurred yet in your community, now is the time to make those contacts and become involved. CIL staffers can offer expertise that will assist with the evacuation process and help shelter workers meet the needs of all individuals. Don't assume that in the midst of a crisis officials will intuitively know how to respond to the needs of individuals with disabilities. The system will likely see people with disabilities through the lens of a medical model. This view may lead to unnecessary placement in a medical facility. If at all possible, keep the person and their supports together!



*When assisting others, remember you cannot help effectively unless you have first taken care of yourself. Remember the advice of the airline attendants when giving emergency instructions: Put the oxygen mask on yourself first, then on a child or another person who needs help.*

(Photo of four people standing looking shocked and distressed in the aftermath of 9/11, courtesy of the Library of Congress)

As part of emergency preparedness training, the CIL can help individuals with disabilities understand what may happen during an evacuation and sheltering. The purpose of explaining the evacuation process and possible scenarios is to help people prepare and/or to avoid being put in the situation, if possible. If warned to leave a location because of impending danger, a person should do so voluntarily – not wait until he/she is forced to go because the options will be more limited. The best advice about sheltering is to try to avoid the need to go to a shelter. Shelters should be a last resort for anyone who is seeking protection from a disaster. Use the following material on evacuation and sheltering to discuss the kinds of preparation necessary for individual support needs.

### **What to expect during evacuation**

Following are some points that CIL emergency preparedness training might include on evacuation:

**Define what is meant by evacuation** – Evacuation is the process of moving from a place of danger to a place of safety. It may involve moving to a different area of a building or home, exiting the building or home, or entering a vehicle to be moved to a different location.

**Evacuating a building or home** – Consider which of the following options are most appropriate and plan accordingly.

- Horizontal evacuation – Use exits to gain access to the outside ground level or move to another wing of a large building. Pay attention to accessible exits.
- Stairway (Vertical) evacuation – Use a stairwell to gain access to the ground level.
- Staying in Place – Unless danger is imminent, remain in a building with an exterior window, a telephone and a solid or fire resistant door.
- Area of Refuge – Go to an area of refuge away from obvious danger.
- Evacuation assistance – Identify a person who can be an “evacuation assistant.” Tell this person what type of help is needed. This person may need to go tell emergency personnel the location of the individual who needs assistance.

***Evacuating an area in a vehicle*** – Consider what is needed to evacuate in a vehicle.

- Wheelchair accessible vehicle – If a vehicle with a lift or ramp is needed, notify emergency personnel.
- Assistive technology – Insist that an individual is transported along with a wheelchair or other needed AT such as oxygen, ventilators.

(Photo of a black guide dog wearing a harness, resting on a bright carpet)



- Personal assistant or service animal – Communicate the essential need for having a personal support remain with the individual.
- Communication – For persons who are deaf or hearing impaired and need written communication, suggest that a pad and paper be brought. For individuals with limited vision, suggest they ask for visual descriptions of where they are going and what is happening.
- Necessary items to take for survival – We’re not talking about photo albums here, but essential life supports. Encourage individuals to anticipate the items they will need that are essential for their own survival, including medications, medical supplies and/or equipment.

### ***What to expect at an emergency shelter***

CIL emergency preparedness training could discuss the following points in regard to sheltering:



**Post-Katrina** - One of the outcomes from Katrina on the Emergency Planning Community was a serious review of emergency shelters and their use by individuals with disabilities. During Katrina, shelters turned away people with disabilities and referred them to "special needs shelters." Service animals were not allowed at the general shelters and individuals with disabilities were often separated from their personal assistants and family members.

(Photograph of destroyed bridge and the city of Biloxi post Katrina, courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

In the years following Katrina, the Department of Justice released the following guidelines: ADA Best Practices Tool Kit for State and Local Governments, which can be accessed at the following website:

<http://www.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/toolkitmain.htm>. The ADA and Emergency Shelters are specifically addressed in Chapter 7 Addendum 2: Access for All in Emergencies and Disasters. In this document, specific directives are provided that address the concerns voiced by the disability community. Key points are established to guide the structure and operation of shelters: (1) Equal access of persons with disabilities; (2) Accessibility; (3) Generally housing people with disabilities in mass care shelters rather than special needs or medical shelters; (4) Reasonable modifications; (5) Effective communication; (6) Shelter environment; (7) Supplies; and (8) Transition back to the community. These guidelines are clearly reflective of the needs of individuals with disabilities and should improve the overall accessibility and utility of shelters in emergency situations.

**Shelter conditions** – Shelters are likely to be buildings such as schools, churches, event centers, or stadiums with large open areas to accommodate large numbers of people. If conditions are crowded, restrooms and water sources may be scarce. Tension will undoubtedly be high because of the emergency situation. Environmental conditions could be horrendous due to lack of power, poor air quality, or extreme cold or hot temperatures. These kinds of conditions are adverse to all people and could be life threatening to individuals with disabilities. Thus, our advice is to avoid shelters if possible. Individuals will have to use their best advocacy skills to get what they need in the shelter.



*People who were blind or had limited vision could not read signs directing people to relief agency stations. They had to wander around crowded, open areas until given direction.*

*– New York City Relief Agency after 9/11 disaster.*

(Photo of a woman being supported by two men walking over the littered street, with an emergency truck behind them after 9/11, courtesy of the Library of Congress)

**Needs during sheltering** – Individuals must advocate for themselves to make sure that those who operate the shelters understand what they need. Shelters may separate individuals with disabilities from their supports, both physical and personal.

CILs can advise shelter workers about some common needs and solutions for individuals with disabilities that seek shelter. The most important advice CIL trainers can give to shelter workers is to always ask the person with disability what assistance he or she needs. Shelter workers need to understand that the individual and/or family members are the best sources of information and guidance for what a person needs. The following are some issues to consider that require advocacy.

- Mobility – Ask for convenient access to rest rooms and food serving areas. Shelter workers may not realize the difficulty one has in navigating physical barriers or walking long distances. Communication aids may be needed for those with limited hearing or speech difficulties – interpreters, written communication, and visual warning signals. Mobility training may be needed for individuals with visual impairments.
- Prescription medications – If the person did not bring medications with them, or their supply runs out before leaving the shelter, make a request to have the prescription filled as soon as possible.
- Personal assistance – Make specific requests for the help that you need. Describe in functional terms the assistance that is needed for eating, transferring, mobility, toileting, or other daily activities.
- Power source for equipment – A power source to plug in a battery charger for a power chair or other essential equipment.

Work with shelter staff to help them see the person, not the disability. Most importantly, help staff understand that people with disabilities know their own needs and emergency workers should talk with them and listen to their expertise.

## ***Summary of Tips on Evacuation and Sheltering***

The following are important tips to remember if you must evacuate due to an emergency:

- Evacuate early if you are advised to do so.
- Avoid shelters whenever possible.
- Keep support workers and family with you.
- Keep assistive technology and medical equipment such as oxygen with you, if at all possible.
- Make a list of things to take with you when evacuating or sheltering away from home.
- Teach shelter workers how to best help you.



(Photo of a man and woman using power chairs coming down a ramp outdoors,  
courtesy of the Center for Persons with Disabilities, Utah State University)

## Section III: Recovery



*Staff and their families are victims of the disaster themselves and are coping with meeting their own immediate needs for safety, shelter, food and water.*  
*-from the CIL Recovery Retreat, December 2005*

(Photo of flooded canal area with destroyed scattered buildings, courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

### ***Staff issues in recovery***

CIL staff members cannot be effective in doing their jobs if they or their family members are in peril. It is equally important for family members and personal assistants to be prepared.

Check the status of each staff member. Managers should try to assess the status of their staff and their families/support systems. Use the communication procedures previously established and ask questions about their well being:

1. Do staff members need shelter, food, medical supplies, etc.?
2. Are the employees' families safe? Do the families have what they need?
3. How are employees doing emotionally?
4. Can they leave their families?
5. When will each person be ready to go back to work full- or part-time?
6. What do they need to be able to get back to work?

Find out how your CIL employees can best be supported as they return to work while facing their own personal challenges and the challenges of the people they support.

Pay attention to your own mental health and that of staff members. Seek out emotional support opportunities, and accept referrals to counseling/stress management. Don't try to do everything that you were doing prior to the disaster immediately afterwards. Begin planning how to move out of crisis mode. It is important that individuals be prepared so they can return to their previous level of health and independence. If they are providing support to others, they should try to return to their prior role as quickly and effectively as possible, but without

jeopardizing their own mental or physical health. Staff members are in the best position to determine when and under what conditions to return to work

### ***Re-establishing CIL functions***

Re-establishing routines, including getting back to work, is important to the well-being of people who have been through a disaster. Your employees and co-workers are your agency's most important and valuable asset. There are some procedures you can put in place before a disaster, but you should also learn about what people need to recover after a disaster. It is possible that your staff will need time to ensure the well-being of their family members, but getting back to work is important to the personal recovery of people who have experienced disasters. It is important to re-establish routines, when possible.

### ***Check the status of your building following a disaster:***

1. Is the building safe for use?
2. Are there any repairs that are needed?
3. What functions are available in the building - Internet, phones, heat/air conditioning?
4. Do critical CIL functions need to be relocated?



(Photo of crushed cars stacked on top of each other, courtesy National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

### ***Restoring CIL operations***

Depending on the scope and severity of the disaster, your CIL may need significant help in restoring your building to useable shape or in resuming operations.

1. Your CIL may have to apply for government or disaster assistance to help with the expenses.
2. You may receive offers of assistance or money following an event.
3. The disastrous event may create different kinds of opportunities for programs and financing than your agency has known in the past.
4. Find out what financial assistance is available from emergency management organizations that may help in recovery.

*A lack of relationships between CILs in the same region prior to the disaster was slated as a major barrier to being able to render assistance quickly.*

(Photo of the New Orleans Marina after Katrina with many boats smashed on dry land, courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)



### **Communication during recovery**

Be prepared to provide employees with information on when, if, and how to report to work following an emergency.

1. Encourage employees to have alternate means and routes for getting to and from work, in case their normal mode of transportation is interrupted.
2. Update your consumers on whether and when you will be back in business.
3. Get the word out that you are back in business. Notify consumers and providers in your area when you are ready to resume operations.
4. Notify emergency managers when you are ready to re-open as they may need to use your Center as a resource.



(Photo of a smashed car in front of a destroyed gas station courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)



*Establishing call-in locations to CILs in other regions less likely to be impacted by a disaster should be established well in advance.*

(Photo of a young woman in front of a computer, typing on a TDD)

The following appendices contain an emergency preparedness checklist for CILs and internet resources to help you gather more information and start the planning process.

**Appendix 1:  
Emergency Preparedness Checklist  
For Centers for Independent Living**

Name of Center:

Phone #:

Web site address:

**A. Emergency Management Assignments**

**Identify the current staff person(s) responsible for the following functions, and identify all relevant training and/or certifications, including the date completed.** (More than one function can be assumed by the same trained staff person or by trained volunteers).

**1. Overall Management**

Manages the overall response and recovery to an emergency and oversees all functions below. This is typically the CIL Director.

Assigned staff person:  
Alternate staff person:

Home phone:  
Home phone:

Cell phone:  
Cell phone:

**2. Operations**

Manages and assists with daily operations of ICS, including the response to client needs during an emergency. Directs the initiation of safety functions listed below, some or all of which may be delegated to other staff. Supervises volunteers unless designated to another function.

Assigned staff person:

Home phone:

Cell phone:

- a. Site security:** Responsible for utilities in an emergency (gas, electric, and water). Checks and turns off gas and/or electricity if damage is evident or can smell gas. Turns off water if the pipes are broken or leaking.

Assigned staff person:

Home phone:

Cell phone:

- b. Fire Suppression:** Checks for and suppresses small fires, if possible. Notifies fire department immediately.

Assigned staff person:

Home phone:

Cell phone:

**c. Search and Rescue:** If evacuation is required, ensures everyone has evacuated safely. Quickly and safely searches the facility for people who may be trapped or injured, and provides assistance to people who need help, if possible. Notes and records position for other responders, including name and location.

Assigned staff person:                      Home phone:                      Cell phone:

**d. First Aid:** Administers first aid to injured persons. *Note: This may require appropriate training for responsible staff members.*

Assigned staff person:                      Home phone:                      Cell phone:

### **3. Logistics**

Responsible for obtaining resources necessary for all functions listed to operate safely for staff, clients, and volunteers . May work in cooperation with Finance.

Assigned staff person:                      Home phone:                      Cell phone:

### **4. Finance**

Tracks all financial activities and costs (receipts, etc.). If necessary, this person is responsible for obtaining in-kind donations, sponsorship, or monetary donations to cover costs. Also must ensure that there are safe back-up copies of the following agency documents: Articles of incorporation (e.g., verification of tax exempt status); recent photographs documenting the interior and exterior of your facility; insurance documentation; licensing documentation, if appropriate; and updated mission statement on letterhead.

Assigned staff person:                      Home phone:                      Cell phone:

### **5. Information/ Planning**

Tracks data, prepares forms for use by staff, manages information, keeps everyone up-to-date on the situation, projects short and long term needs for clients and works with Incident Command to develop and implement plans to meet these needs.

Assigned staff person:                      Home phone:                      Cell phone:

### **6. Other:**

Position Title:

Responsibilities:

Assigned staff person:                      Home phone:                      Cell phone:

## B. Facility Preparation

1. Prepare all the furniture, appliances, computers, and other freestanding objects so that they are adequately secured. Think about the following: what is the goal, is it reasonable, and who has been selected to make this determination?
2. Move heavy items to lower shelves in closets and cabinets.
3. Check cabinet doors to make certain that they can be closed securely.
4. Remove or isolate flammable materials (should implement ongoing policies to address this issue on a regular basis).
5. Clearly mark gas and water shut-off valves and fuse box. Post legible (laminated, if possible) instructions on how to shut off each one.
6. Maintain a conveniently located set of tools (including pipe and crescent wrenches) to facilitate prompt gas shut-off.
7. Post locations of water and gas shut-off valve and fuse box in central locations.
8. Place a facility evacuation plan in an area accessible to the public (post at entrances and other selected locations such as stairs, elevators, etc.)

*Indicate the location at each site where the following items, in working condition, can be found:*

- Portable radio and extra batteries
- Emergency first aid supplies
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Wrenches and other tools
- Fire extinguishers

Assign a staff member the task of maintaining these supplies and making sure that they are in working order

## C. Inventory of Neighborhood Resources

1. In an extended power outage, should you rent or borrow a generator? Can you (or someone on your staff) operate and/or maintain a generator?
2. If phones and/or cell phones at your agency are not working, where is the nearest pay phone? A pay phone may operate sooner than a normal business phone. Are there coins in petty cash? Do you have a stock of prepaid phone cards?

3. Where is the nearest public health clinic?  
Name, address, phone:
4. Where is the nearest place to go for help, if the phones aren't working?  
Name and address:
5. Does the nearest fire station know about your agency?  
Address and phone:
6. Does the nearest police station know about your agency?  
Address and phone:

#### D. Meeting the Needs of the People You Serve

1. How many clients could be at your site in a disaster?
2. Is there an off-site location to which they might be sent if the site is too small to accommodate large numbers, or not in working condition?  
Address and phone:
3. How will you find out about the condition of people you serve who are off-site?
4. In an emergency, who else needs information about the status of people you serve? Off-site staff? Families of clients? List the most critical contacts that need to be made:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.

*The following assumes that an emergency may require you to **provide shelter** to clients at your facility. In order to better prepare for such an eventuality, it is suggested that you contact your local American Red Cross to receive more information on local mass shelter or to receive training in mass shelter management.*

5. Where can you go for additional water?
6. Where can you go for additional food?
7. What else will be needed (e.g. medicine, first aid kit, special equipment, etc.)?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.

*The following assumes an emergency may require you to **evacuate** your location. In order to better prepare for such an eventuality, it is suggested that you contact your local American Red Cross to receive updated information on evacuation plans and potential shelters in your community.*

8. How many customers/clients/employees may need to evacuate in the event of a disaster?
9. What is the location of the nearest shelter?  
Address and phone:
10. How will those needing to evacuate be transported to the nearest shelter?

## E. Preparing Staff for Emergencies

*(In an emergency, the first concern of staff will be the safety and welfare of family members)*

1. How many staff members/consumers could be at your site at the time of a disaster?
2. The agency will want to ensure that all staff members have an opportunity to check on their homes and family members as soon as possible following a disaster. How will this be accomplished? What critical functions must be performed? Who will perform them?
3. Staff is encouraged to have a family or home emergency plan. Resources can be found via your local American Red Cross or at [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov). Prior planning increases the likelihood that staff and their families can cope with the disaster without outside help.
4. All staff should be trained in basic emergency preparedness (please contact your local American Red Cross or utilize the resources listed at the end of this document to learn more about basic emergency preparedness). Identify staff with specialized training (CPR, CERT, etc.).
5. How will your agency assess the status of staff members and their families following an emergency?
  - a. Are staff members trained to call in to a general number following an emergency to provide a status update within a certain period of time? Are they in good health, is their family in good health, is their property damaged?
  - b. Are managers expected to contact those under their direct supervision to assess their status?
  - c. If so, do managers have a list of emergency contact numbers for each staff member?

- d. How often is this list updated? Every six months is suggested.
  - e. Have managers shared this list with upper management in the event that they are unable to carry out this duty?
6. Does your agency conduct periodic fire and other emergency drills?
  7. Does your agency have copies of plans, emergency contact information, and related legal papers (certificate of 501(c)3 status, for example) collected in one location in the event that operations move from the main facility? Are these papers also stored in a secure location off-site? Are they stored in electronic files? Are regular back-up procedures implemented? Have plans been made for business continuity?

## F. Personnel Resources

*(Staffing necessary for post disaster response)*

1. Realistically, how many staff will work after a disaster, if it strikes during work?
2. Develop a list of home telephone numbers (of staff and either trained or potential volunteers) for use in an emergency. Update every 6 months.

## G. Evacuation/Transportation

*(Fire or structural damage may require you to evacuate your building in an emergency.)*

1. Will staff or clients need assistance with evacuating your facility? Have you assigned staff or volunteers to help these individuals?
2. If your facility must be evacuated, assign a staff person with responsibility for taking a head count to ensure all staff and program participants have exited.

*The following questions anticipate that you must evacuate your building, and that you have responsibility for the care and shelter of the people you serve (including staff).*

3. Identify a temporary shelter to be used (consider churches, nearby community centers, schools, or other residential facilities). You may want to develop mutual aid agreements with these sites in order to make sure space is available for your clients, and you will want to have an alternate site prepared.

Temporary Shelter Name:

Address:

Contact Person:

Phone:

4. Will you need a phone list or system for letting authorities, family and friends know where you are sheltering program participants?  
Date phone list developed:
5. Identify and plan for alternative transportation to the shelter, or clients' homes, if necessary.
6. If evacuated, what will your clients need that may not be available in mass shelters? Who is responsible for obtaining and maintaining these resources?

**Important Phone Numbers:** (Post near all phones)

Emergency Operations Center:

Police:

Fire:

Sheriff:

County Health Dept.:

Natural Gas Company:

Mental Health Authority:

Weather:

## **Appendix 2: Internet Resources**

### ***Resources to Support Organizational Emergency Planning***

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website**  
<http://www.fema.gov>

**Protect your property home or business from disaster**  
<http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/howto/index.shtm>

**Disaster preparedness for people with disabilities – Resources**  
National Organization on Disability, 2002:  
[www.nod.org](http://www.nod.org) (search for article once at site)  
NOD provides an extensive list of websites, articles, checklists, and training programs at this site. Many of the sites are listed in this guide as well.

**Preparing your business for the Unthinkable**, American Red Cross  
[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

This short document offers several suggestions for developing a disaster preparedness plan, protecting employees and customers in the event of a disaster, and reducing any damage that might result from a disaster.

**Employers' guide to including employees with disabilities in emergency evacuation plans**, Job Accommodation Network, 2002  
<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/emergency.html>

This document provides suggestions on how to improve one's emergency response plan and training program, as well as various work-site modifications and accommodations that may be employed to mitigate disasters. It also includes a list of resources on the topic of emergency preparedness for people with disabilities.

**Howard County Agency disaster preparedness plan**  
<http://www.cern.us/ht/d/sp/a/GetDocumentAction/i/634?PHPSESSID=de488a551769c0f75f21859930d76e8c#search=%22Volunteer%20Center%20Serving%20Howard%20County%20Agency%20Disaster%20Preparedness%20Plan%22>

An example for emergency planning for your organization.

## ***Resources to Support Individual Emergency Planning***

There are a number of excellent resources on the Internet that provide detailed information on individual emergency plans and disability issues. Many of these resources can provide you with checklists of what to include in an Individual Emergency Response Plan (IERP) and how to develop comprehensive personalized plans. Please consider the following list of resources to find more detailed information and tools your CIL can use to help people prepare.

### **Disability Preparedness Resource Center**

<http://www.disabilitypreparedness.gov/>

This disability preparedness web site provides practical information on how people with and without disabilities can prepare for an emergency. It also provides information for family members and service providers. In addition, this site includes information for emergency planners and first responders to help them better prepare for serving persons with disabilities. Select the link “Personal Preparedness Planning” to access information and guidance in developing your plan of action if faced with an emergency or disaster.

### **Prepare.org Disaster Preparedness for Persons with Disabilities**

<http://www.prepare.org/disabilities/disabilitiesprep.htm>

This site contains an American Red Cross resource guide for planning accessible emergency preparedness and includes a summary checklist to help individuals develop a comprehensive emergency response plan as well as a summary checklist for what to include in a disaster supply kit.

### **National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.)**

<http://www.nod.org/> Select the link “**Emergency Preparedness**”

This site provides access to information on useful tips and resources on how to prepare for disasters. Specific brochures available on this site include:

- Prepare Yourself- Disaster Readiness Tips for People with Disabilities
- Disaster Readiness Tips for People with Mobility Disabilities
- Disaster Readiness Tips for People with Sensory Disabilities
- Disaster Readiness Tips for People with Developmental or Cognitive Disabilities
- Disaster Readiness Tips for Owners of Pets or Service Animals.

### **Center for Disability Issues and the Health Professions**

<http://www.cdihp.org/evacuation/toc.html>

Emergency Evacuation Preparedness: Taking Responsibility For Your Safety A Guide For People with Disabilities and Other Activity Limitations.

### **DisabilityResources.org**

<http://www.disabilityresources.org/DISASTER.html>

The Disability Resources Monthly (DRM) Guide to Disability Resources on the Internet: this site provides a variety of links to additional resources.

**Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities**

[http://www.lacity.org/DOD/indexpage/dodindexpage169439091\\_07102006.pdf](http://www.lacity.org/DOD/indexpage/dodindexpage169439091_07102006.pdf)

The City of Los Angeles Department on Disability provides information for people who are blind or have visual impairments, for owners of service animals and pets, for people with mobility limitations, for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, for people with special medical needs.

**Disaster Preparedness for Persons with Mobility Impairments**

(by June Kailes)

<http://www.prepare.org/disabilities/evacuation.pdf>

“Serving and Protecting All by Applying Lessons Learned-Including People with Disabilities and Seniors in Disaster Services” and “Emergency Evacuation Preparedness: Taking Responsibility for Your Safety.”