

Emergency Preparedness

Vital Advice For Hearing Aid Wearers

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(NAPSA)—Some disasters, such as hurricanes, can be tracked in advance so you have time to prepare before they actually strike. Others descend with little to no advance warning. If you have hearing loss, the wisest course is to put an emergency plan into place while there is no threat brewing. These four tips can help:

1. Register for all available emergency alert systems. Opt into all available alert systems and text notifications so if an urgent situation arises, you'll get the warning. For information on the various national level alerts, including Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs), visit www.ready.gov/alerts.

Your emergency plan should include the locations of nearby shelters. If you have a service dog, make sure you have all its identifying paperwork, tags or vest ready, along with bedding and at least three days' supply of food, water and medication.

2. Put together a list of your health and medical needs. Your emergency kit should include:

- Names and contact information for your doctors
- List of any allergies or other chronic medical conditions
- List of any required medications and dosages
- Your blood type
- Any medical and communications devices you might require (hearing aids, hearing aid accessories)
- Health insurer name and full membership information (plan name, group number)
- Names and contact information for your preferred hospital and pharmacy
- Hearing aid make, model, and manufacturer information.

3. Assemble all possible communication methods. Figure out all the alternatives you can use to communicate, such as hearing aid accessories (assistive listening devices, or ALDs) that let you hand someone a microphone so you can hear what he or she says directly in your hearing aids. If your devices are equipped with telecoils (T-coils), make sure you know how to activate that setting. If you have difficulty speaking, create and store text messages in a smartphone or tablet (for example: "I am hard of hearing," "Do you know sign language?" or "I can't hear you, please write"). Write the same messages in a notebook or on cue cards as backup, in case your high-tech devices fail or run out of power.



Be prepared: Write out and gather up an emergency checklist of things you'll need in case of a disaster.

4. Gather supplies and store in a carry-on bag somewhere you can access quickly. It should have:

- Bottled water
- Jerky, protein bars, cheese or peanut butter crackers, and similar nourishing snacks
- Copies of important documents sealed in a waterproof bag (insurance cards, driver's licenses, Social Security cards)
- Flashlight and spare batteries (alternately, a crank-powered flashlight)
- \$100 cash, in small bills, also sealed in a waterproof bag
- Backup supplies for any medical devices (hearing aid charger, hearing aid batteries)
- Cell phone charger and backup rechargeable battery supply
- Compact travel blanket, pillow
- Personal hygiene items (toothbrush and toothpaste, sanitary pads)
- All-weather packable jacket
- Crank weather alert portable radio. Also consider a separate emergency kit for your car with a first-aid kit, repair tools, flares and booster cables.

Don't wait for disaster to strike. The time to prepare for an emergency is while everything is going well.

Learn More

For further facts on hearing loss and hearing aids, go to www.signiausa.com.

• *Dr. Taghvaei is an Educational Specialist with Signia. He conducts very complex individual and group technical training courses and activities involving new and existing developments in audiology, products, software and technology for employees and customers. He demonstrates multisystem products by preparing and conducting clinician training, supports clinical product offerings, and performs in-house clinical trials for the Audiology Department team. He has extensive clinical experience in pediatric and adult hearing instrument and cochlear implant fitting, programming and rehabilitation.*