



Emergency Preparedness for Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

Introduction	> > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > >	4
About this Guide	> > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > >	5
Know the Risks	> > > > > > > > > > > > > > > > >	6
Personal Support Network	> > > > > > > > > > > > > > >	7
Planning for Emergencies	> > > > > > > > > > > > > > >	8
Emergency Preparedness Tips and How to Provide Assistance	> > > > > > > > > > > > > > >	11
Individuals with Hearing Loss	> > > > > > > > > > > > > > >	12
Individuals with Vision Loss	> > > > > > > > > > > > > > >	14
Individuals with Physical or Mobility Disabilities	> > > > > >	16
Individuals with Invisible Disabilities and Medical Needs	> > >	19
Seniors with a Disability	> > > > > > > > > > > > > > >	22
Individuals with Disabilities in High-Rise Buildings	> > > >	24
Build an Emergency Kit	> > > > > > > > > > > > > > >	26
Service Animal Emergency Kit Checklist	> > > > > > > > >	28
Personal Assessment Sheet and Checklist	> > > > > > > > >	30

Introduction

Emergencies and disasters can strike quickly and without warning. For the 174,000 residents in Mississauga with a disability, the impact is often heightened.

This guide provides emergency preparedness information for older adults and people with disabilities and their caregivers. The impact of disasters on people with disabilities is often compounded by factors such as reliance on electrical power, accessible transportation and communication, or access to medication – all of which can be compromised during an emergency event.

Emergency preparedness is a shared responsibility. All Canadians are encouraged to be prepared to cope for at least the first 72 hours of an emergency, while emergency workers focus on those in urgent need. By taking a few simple steps today, you can become better prepared to face a range of emergencies. These necessary steps should help you to take care of yourself and your loved ones during an emergency.

Emergency preparedness involves three basic steps:

- 1 Make a plan**
- 2 Build a kit**
- 3 Be informed**

Please refer to the City of Mississauga's Emergency Preparedness Guide for general information on how to make an emergency plan for your household/family.



About this Guide

- > Each section provides a list of suggested emergency kit items and planning tips for individuals and caregivers according to specific disabilities.
- > Complete the checklist and personal assessment sheet at the end of this guide, and keep it in an accessible place at home (on the fridge, bulletin board, etc.).
- > Refer to the last pages of the guide for additional contact information.
- > This guide does not offer first aid training or medical advice. Specific medical advice should be obtained from licensed medical professionals.

Know the Risks

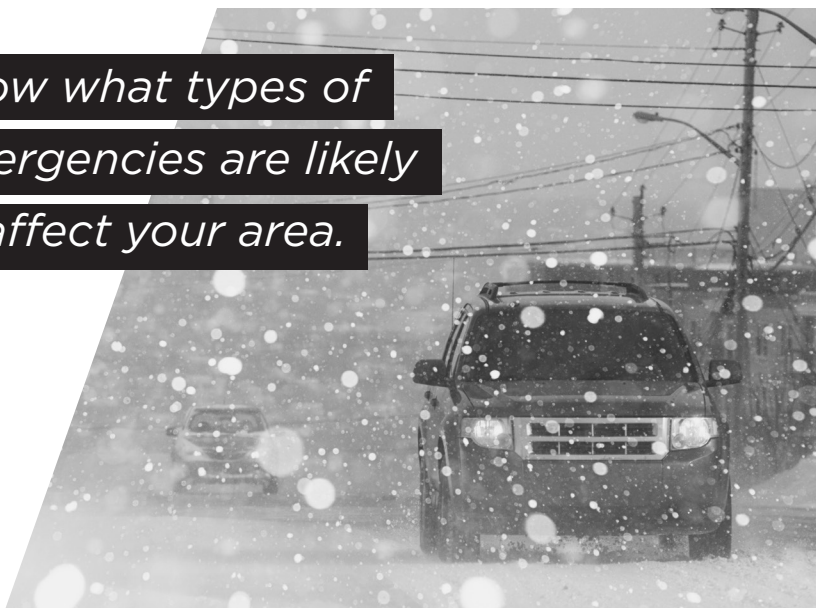
It is important to know what types of emergencies are likely to affect your region. To educate yourself about specific risks that could affect Mississauga, visit our emergency preparedness website at mississauga.ca/emergencymanagement.

It is essential to stay informed about current weather conditions and situations with the potential to escalate into an emergency or disaster. If you are blind, deaf or hard of hearing, plan for someone to convey essential emergency information to you. Learn about devices (such as pagers or text radio) that can help you receive emergency information from local officials. The most effective way for emergency services to communicate information about an emergency or disaster is through traditional means, like radio, television and social media.

You can receive emergency alerts sent to your smartphone by downloading the WeatherCan app and access current weather conditions on the Government of Canada's local forecast page at weather.gc.ca.



Know what types of emergencies are likely to affect your area.



Personal Support Network

A personal support network is a group of at least three people you know and trust who would help you during an emergency.

How do you create a support network?

- > Ask people you trust if they are willing to help you in the event of an emergency. Identify contacts for important locations such as home, work or school. Neighbours are often the closest and most available contacts during an emergency.
- > If you rely on any life-sustaining equipment or if you require regular attendant care, ask your network to check on you immediately if an emergency occurs and have an emergency backup plan in the event of a power outage.
- > Let your support contacts know where your emergency kit is stored. Consider giving one member that you trust a key to your home.
- > Include one support network contact who is farther away that is unlikely to be affected by the same emergency.
- > Work with your support network to develop a plan that meets your needs.
- > Practice your emergency plan with your network. If applicable, show them how your assistive devices and equipment works.

Planning for Emergencies

When planning for emergencies, persons with disabilities should make several considerations:

- > Self-identify as a person with a disability to your support network, neighbours, and building management (if you live in an apartment or condominium).
- > Be prepared to provide clear and concise instructions to emergency services personnel and others who may be assisting you in an emergency. If you have difficulty speaking, consider having this information available on a printed card.
- > Locate escape routes, emergency exits and safe places, such as meeting locations or a large assembly area. If you live in an apartment or condominium, ask the management to identify and mark accessible exits and access areas for emergency shelters or safe rooms. Learn about your building's evacuation procedures and plans to alert and evacuate those with sensory or mobility disabilities.
- > Teach those who may need to assist you, such as your support network, a co-worker or caregiver to operate necessary equipment. Let people know which evacuation technique you prefer.
- > Label equipment and attach laminated instructions for equipment use.
- > Create an emergency contact list of relatives and out-of-area contacts who can be contacted in an emergency.
- > Make a household emergency action plan.



< *Be prepared to provide clear and concise instructions.*

< *Locate escape routes, emergency exits and safe places.*

Planning for Emergencies Continued

- > Build a basic 3-day emergency kit. Include supplies that you may need in an emergency or disaster that helps you take care of yourself for 3 days.
- > Complete a personal assessment sheet. Provide a copy to your personal support network and keep a list of contacts in your emergency kit.
- > List all food/drug allergies and current medications (for each medication, specify the medical condition being treated, generic name, dosage, frequency and the name and contact information of the prescribing physician). Provide this list to your support network and keep a copy in your emergency kit. Wear a medical alert bracelet that details any medical conditions or special needs for anyone helping you if you are unable to help or speak for yourself.
- > Make sure you can be alerted and located in an emergency. Consider carrying a personal alarm or whistle that makes a loud noise to draw attention. Consider getting a medical alert system that will allow you to call for help if you are immobilized in an emergency.
- > If you require assistance during an emergency, obtain large printed signs from the building manager that you can place in your window or door indicating that you need assistance.

Knowing all your escape routes at home and work will ensure that you can exit the building quickly and safely during an emergency. Develop your home escape plan and learn more about apartment and condominium building fire safety from Mississauga Fire and Emergency Services at mississauga.ca/fire.

Be aware that experiencing an emergency can be overwhelming and stress can worsen some medical conditions.

Emergency Preparedness Tips and How to Provide Assistance

When assisting someone with a disability:

- > Ask if the person wants your help and how you can best assist them. Do not assume they need help or know how to help them.
- > If someone refuses your help, wait for first responders to arrive, unless it is a matter of life and death.
- > Do not touch the person, their service animal or equipment without their permission, unless it is a matter of life and death.
- > Follow instructions posted on assistive devices/aids.
- > Use latex-free gloves to reduce the spread of viral infection or to prevent an allergic reaction to latex.
- > Do not try to move someone unless you are trained in proper techniques.
- > If the person has a service animal, it is up to the animal owner to assess whether or not it is safe for the animal to work through an emergency situation.

More specific information and tips for assisting people with different disabilities can be found in the following sections of this guide.

Individuals with Hearing Loss

People who have hearing loss may identify in different ways. They may be deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. The distinction between these terms is based on the individual's language and means of communicating, rather than the degree of hearing loss. In an emergency, the method in which emergency warnings are issued becomes critical to how a person with hearing loss is able to respond and follow instructions to safety.

Emergency planning considerations

- > If you need assistance during an emergency, communicate your hearing loss by moving your lips without making a sound, pointing to your ear, using a gesture or if applicable, pointing to your hearing aid.
- > Keep a pencil and paper handy for written communication.
- > Obtain a pager that is connected to an emergency paging system at your workplace or your home.
- > Install a smoke detection system that includes flashing strobe lights or vibrators to get your attention if the alarms sound.
- > Test smoke alarms monthly by pushing the test button.
- > Replace batteries every six months or whenever there is a low battery signal.



*Communicate your hearing
loss by moving your lips
without making a sound
and pointing to your ear.*

In addition to a basic 3-day emergency kit, recommended additional kit items include:

- > Writing pads and pencils for communication.
- > Pre-printed phrases you would use during an emergency such as "I use American Sign Language".
- > Additional hearing aid (if you have one) and extra batteries.
- > Portable visual notification devices to know if someone is knocking on the door, calling on the telephone or attached to any smoke and fire alarms.
- > If you have a cochlear implant, consider having medical bracelet that an MRI or CT must be avoided due to the damage they can cause these devices.
- > Visual cue cards in case there is no electricity available for portable visual notification devices.
- > Keep a card on you and in your emergency kit that identifies you as deaf or hard of hearing that explains how to communicate with you.

Consider registering for the Text with 9-1-1 service at textwith911.ca.

When assisting someone with hearing loss

- > Get the person's attention with a visual cue or a gentle touch on their arm. Do not approach the person from behind.
- > Face the person; try and move to a well-lit area. Make eye contact when speaking to them as they may rely on lip reading and communication in close proximity.
- > Use gestures to help illustrate your meaning.
- > If supplies are available, write a message.
- > Be aware that some people may be deafblind.

Individuals with Vision Loss

A person who is blind or has reduced vision may have difficulty reading signs, moving through unfamiliar environments or seeing hazards during an emergency. They may feel lost and/or dependent on others for guidance.

Emergency planning considerations

- > Have a long white cane available to readily maneuver around obstacles (there may be debris on the floor or furniture may have shifted).
- > Identify all emergency supplies in advance with fluorescent tape, large print or Braille text, such as gas, water and electric shutoff valves.
- > Familiarize yourself in advance with all escape routes and locations of emergency doors/exits on each floor of any building where you work, live and visit.

Ensure that your emergency kit is easily identifiable and accessible. In addition to a basic 3-day emergency kit, recommended additional kit items include:

- > A smart clock or smart speaker, if you own one.
- > Assistive technology you use to access information, such as emergency alerts.
- > Spare glasses.
- > Extra white cane.
- > A 3-day emergency kit for your service animal (see service animal emergency kit checklist on page 28).



Use a long white cane to maneuver around obstacles.



Assisting someone with vision loss

- > Do not assume the person cannot see you; not everyone with vision loss is entirely blind, many have some vision.
- > Offer your elbow to guide them if needed. If they accept, lead – don't pull. Never grab a person with vision loss, unless it is a matter of life or death.
- > Describe precise positions, such as, "to your right/left/straight-ahead/behind you," or by using clock face positions.
- > People with reduced vision may struggle with reading signs or moving quickly in unfamiliar areas and may rely on others for direction and guidance.
- > If you need to leave them for a moment, guide them to a comfortable location and let them know by telling them you'll be back.
- > For people who are deafblind, draw an "X" on their back with your finger to let them know you can help them.
- > To communicate with someone who is deafblind, trace letters in their hand with your finger.
- > If the person has a service animal on duty, ask them where you should walk to avoid distracting the animal. Do not separate the service animal from its owner.

Individuals with Physical or Mobility Disabilities

Mobility limitations may make it difficult for a person to use stairs or move quickly over long distances. Limitations may include reliance on mobility equipment such as a wheelchair, walker, crutches or walking cane. People with other conditions, such as a heart condition or respiratory difficulties, may also have limited mobility.

Emergency planning considerations

- > If you use a wheelchair or scooter and live in an apartment or condominium, request that an emergency evacuation chair be stored near a stairwell on the same floor where you work or live, so that your support network can readily access it to help you evacuate. The person with the disability should be involved in the selection of the evacuation chair.
- > If you require the use of an evacuation chair, designate a primary and backup contact to assist you in the event of an evacuation. Create an evacuation plan in collaboration with the building manager and contact persons, and practice using the chair with them.
- > In your personal assessment checklist, identify areas of your body that have reduced sensation so that these areas can be checked for injuries after an emergency if you cannot do so yourself.
- > Contact 3-1-1 to find out if emergency shelters in your area are wheelchair accessible.



*Practice your
evacuation plan
once a year.*

In addition to a basic 3-day emergency kit, recommended additional kit items include:

- > A tire patch kit, seal-in-air product, inner tubes, backup battery and spare catheters if you use a wheelchair.
- > A lightweight, manual wheelchair as a backup to a motorized chair.
- > A power outage backup plan.
- > Heavy gloves for making your way over glass and debris.
- > The make, model and battery type of a power chair (if you use one), and contact information for battery suppliers.

Planning for an evacuation with a mobility disability

- > Familiarize yourself with all escape routes, emergency exits and emergency equipment in your home.
- > If you are in a wheelchair, know if it can be easily transported. Be aware of several different ways to exit a building in the event the elevators are out of service and your main route is blocked.
- > Have alternate evacuation assistance devices such as a lightweight chair that can be used if you have to leave the wheelchair behind.
- > Be prepared to give brief instructions regarding how to move you, should it be required.





Assisting Someone with Mobility Limitations

- > Try to ensure that the individual's wheelchair is transported with them.
- > If this is not possible, employ evacuation techniques as appropriate, shelter-in-place or lifts and wait for trained personnel to arrive.
- > Do not touch or move a person's equipment (for example, wheelchair or walker) without their permission, unless it is a matter of life or death.
- > Use latex-free gloves whenever possible when administering care, people with spinal cord injuries have a greater risk of infectious disease and gloves help control secondary medical conditions that can easily arise if personal care was disrupted during an emergency.

Mobility limitations can create difficulty in using stairs, moving quickly or travelling long distances. Individuals may rely on a cane, wheelchair, crutches or a walker. Be aware that people who are pregnant, have heart conditions or respiratory difficulties may also have limited mobility.



Try to ensure that the individual's wheelchair is transported with them.

Individuals with Invisible Disabilities and Medical Needs

Individuals with invisible disabilities may have difficulty performing some tasks even though their condition is not apparent. Invisible disabilities can include communication, cognitive, sensory, mental health, learning or intellectual disabilities which may impair an individual's response to an emergency. Conditions can include allergies, epilepsy, diabetes, pulmonary or heart disease, and/or dependency on dialysis, different supplies, etc.

In addition to a basic 3-day emergency kit, recommended additional kit items include:

- > A list of your medications (name, dose, frequency, and the name of the prescribing doctor).
- > Written information (in detail) about how to administer your medication, what equipment you use, allergies and your emergency medical contacts.
- > Supply of food items appropriate to your dietary restrictions.
- > A 3-day supply (at minimum) of medication and medical supplies readily available. Replenish your kit with a fresh supply of medications before they expire. Be sure to ask your pharmacist how best to store your medications.
- > Always wear a medical alert bracelet or identification (if you have it) to help notify emergency responders about your medical or cognitive condition and any medications or devices you may need.
- > List of instructions that you can easily follow during an emergency.
- > Any other contingency supplies unique to your situation.
- > Keep an emergency contact list on you. This list should note key people that are aware of the assistance you may require.

Actions you can take:

- > Inform your personal support network of where you store your medication.
- > Request that a panic push-button be installed in your work and living areas so you can notify others of your location and that you need special assistance during an emergency.

For people with diabetes

- > Extra supply of insulin or pills (including syringes, needles or pens if necessary).
- > A small container for storing used pens, syringes and needles.
- > Blood glucose kit (including blood glucose and urine ketone testing strips), spare batteries and record book.
- > Fast-acting insulin for high blood glucose/fast-acting sugar for low blood glucose.
- > Extra food to cover delayed foods.
- > Ice packs and thermal bag to secure insulin.

If you require life support and essential medical devices

- > Contact Alectra Utilities about your power needs for full life-support devices in advance. They might be able to make your power reconnection a priority. Regardless, it is essential to have power backup options for your equipment, such as batteries and a generator.

If you take medication and/or require medical treatment

- > Make a list of your medications (name, dose, frequency, and the name of the prescribing doctor) and store in your kit (please check the personal assessment sheet and checklist at the end of this manual).
- > If you receive medical treatment from a clinic or hospital, ask your health care provider what you should do in case of an emergency.

Assisting Someone with Invisible Disabilities

- > Allow the person to describe the help they need.
- > Find effective ways to communicate, such as drawn or written instructions, using landmarks instead of general terms like “go left” or “turn right”.
- > Maintain eye contact when speaking to the person.
- > Repeat instructions (if needed).
- > If a person needs to take medication, ask if he/she needs help taking it. (Never offer medicine not prescribed by a physician.)
- > If the person has a service animal on duty, ask them where you should walk to avoid distracting the animal. Do not separate the service animal from its owner.
- > Ask what tasks the service animal can assist with. Individuals with invisible disabilities may have difficulty performing some tasks even though their condition is not apparent.

◀ *Have an extra supply
of insulin or pills.*



Seniors with a Disability

Contact 3-1-1 to find out about programs and services in your area that will help you during an emergency and assist you in returning to your daily routine.

Emergency planning considerations

- > Create an emergency contact list identifying your personal support network, including physicians, caseworkers, a contact from a seniors group, neighbours and your building management (if you live in an apartment or condominium).
- > Keep a copy of this list in your emergency kit and on you.
- > Familiarize yourself with all escape routes, emergency equipment and the location of emergency doors/exits in your home.
- > If you have a pet, bring it with you in an evacuation and have an emergency plan for your pet. Determine in advance who can take care of your pet during an emergency.
- > Request that a panic push-button be installed in your work and/or living area so that in the event of an emergency you can notify others of your location and that you need special assistance.



*Create an emergency
contact list.*



*Check with neighbours
to see who needs help.*

Recommended additional items for your emergency kit

- > Non-perishable food appropriate to your dietary restrictions.
- > Assistive devices needed such as canes, walkers, lightweight manual wheelchair, hearing aids, breathing device and blood glucose monitoring device.
- > Extra prescription eyewear and footwear (if required).
- > Extra supply of medications and vitamin supplements.
- > A list of all your medical supplies and special equipment.
- > Copies of all medication prescriptions.
- > Extra dentures (if required) and cleaner.
- > Latex-free gloves (for anyone providing personal care to you).

Assisting Seniors with Disabilities

- > Check with your neighbours to find out if there are seniors who would need your help during an emergency.
- > Always speak calmly and provide assurance that you are there to help. Avoid shouting or speaking unnaturally slow.
- > Let the person tell you how you can help.
- > Know the location of emergency buttons (many seniors' buildings have emergency buttons located in bedrooms and washrooms).
- > Follow instructions posted on assistive devices/aids.

Individuals with Disabilities in High-Rise Buildings

Residents of high-rise buildings should make themselves aware of:

- > The building management's contact information.
- > Members of the building safety committee.
- > The contact names and locations of floor monitors.
- > Who conducts evacuation drills and how often.
- > Location of fire extinguishers.
- > Defibrillator units and oxygen tank.
- > Location of emergency evacuation devices.

Emergency planning considerations

- > If you feel comfortable doing so, advise your building management of your need for evacuation assistance during an emergency.
- > Know your building's evacuation plan and escape routes.
- > Know the location of emergency buttons in the building and exits that are wheelchair accessible (if applicable).
- > If applicable, request that an emergency evacuation chair be installed close to the stairwell on the floor where you work or live. If you cannot have an evacuation chair, have a backup plan for evacuating without one.

Do not use elevators in the event of fire or smoke or if the emergency is likely to lead to a power outage. >

Assisting Individuals with Disabilities in High-Rise Buildings

- > Check on neighbours or co-workers to find out if they need your help in the event of an emergency. Ask if they have any conditions that you should be aware of (as some neighbours may have invisible disabilities)
- > Offer to carry the person's emergency kit along with any special equipment.
- > Avoid attempts to lift, support or assist someone's movement down stairways, unless you are familiar with safe techniques.
- > Do not use elevators in the event of fire or smoke or if the emergency is likely to lead to a power outage.



Build an Emergency Kit

Build a 3-day emergency kit to use during an emergency evacuation of your home or community and ensure everyone in your home knows where to find it. Don't forget to check your kit twice a year to refresh food, water and medication, and restock any supplies you may have used or that have expired.

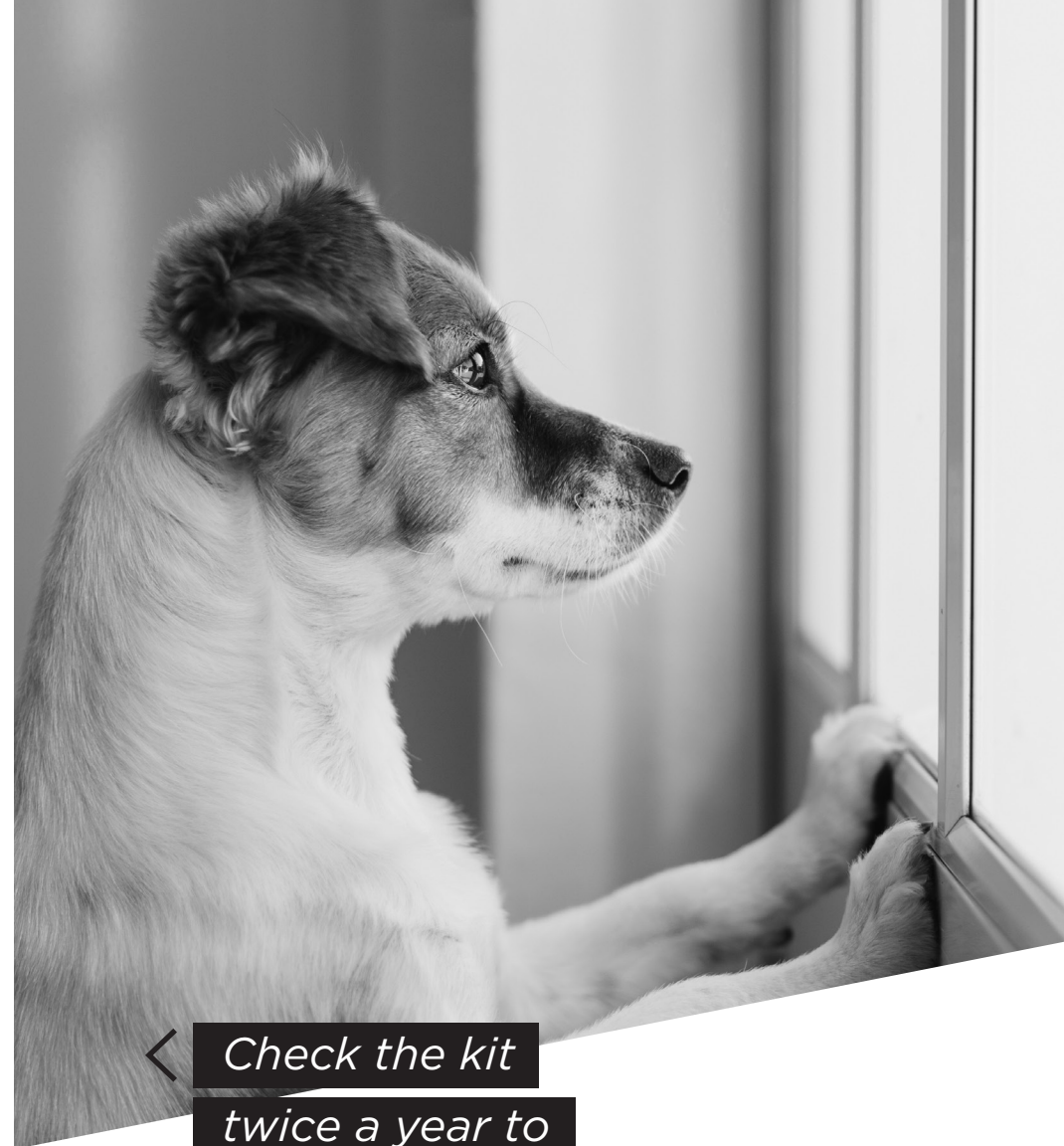
Your kit should include the following items into an easy-to-carry container(s), such as a backpack, duffle bag or suitcase on wheels:

- > Flashlight (test monthly)
- > Chargers for electronic devices
- > Portable power bank for electronic devices
- > Battery-operated or crank radio
- > Spare batteries
- > First-aid kit
- > Flameless candles and batteries
- > Spare car keys
- > Cash
- > Important papers (copies of identification, insurance policies)
- > Non-perishable food (that does not need to be refrigerated) and bottled water (12 litres of water per person)
- > Items needed to open food (such as a manual can opener)
- > Clothing and footwear
- > Blankets or sleeping bags
- > Toilet paper and other personal hygiene items
- > Medication (especially prescription)
- > Eyewear (glasses/contacts)
- > Whistle (to attract attention, if needed)
- > Playing cards (or other quiet games/toys)
- > Paper, pencils and pens
- > Map of your community (for locating reception centres)
- > A copy of this guide
- > Tools and supplies



Service Animal Emergency Kit Checklist

- > Bottled water and food
- > Paper towels, manual can opener and food bowls
- > Medications with a list identifying reasons (e.g. medical condition, dosage and frequency)
- > Leash/harness/muzzle
- > Blankets/towels and favourite toy
- > Plastic bags
- > Litter pan, litter and scooper
- > Up-to-date ID tag with your phone number (microchipping is also recommended) and veterinarian contact information
- > Medical records, including current vaccinations (most boarding facilities will not accept pets without them)
- > Current photo of your pet or service animal in case they get lost or separated from you
- > Information on pet's feeding schedule, behavioural/medical concerns and special instructions in case they need to be boarded
- > List of boarding facilities or friends/relatives your pets could stay with (emergency shelters are typically designated for people only, except for service animals)
- > Service animal documentation
- > Copy of pet licence



*Check the kit
twice a year to
ensure freshness.*

Personal Assessment Sheet and Checklist

In the event that you need help, consider completing this section so others know who to contact.

My name is:

I live at:

My phone number is:

My emergency kit can be found:

I am able to:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hear | <input type="checkbox"/> Sit without help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> See | <input type="checkbox"/> Sit with help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walk without help | <input type="checkbox"/> Wash/bathe without help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walk with help | <input type="checkbox"/> Wash/bathe with help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare my meals | <input type="checkbox"/> Sanitary needs without help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feed myself | <input type="checkbox"/> Sanitary needs with help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dress myself | |

I will need specific help with:

Prescription name and #:

Dose/frequency:

Purpose:

Prescription name and #:

Dose/Frequency:

Purpose:

Special equipment I use:

Allergies:

Special diet:

Other requirements:

I have a service animal, his/her name is:

He/she helps me:

His/her emergency kit can be found:

Personal support network contact list (family members, attendants, neighbours, etc.)

Name: _____

Relation: _____

Address: _____

Phone (cell/home): _____

Phone (business): _____

Name: _____

Relation: _____

Address: _____

Phone (cell/home): _____

Phone (business): _____

Name: _____

Relation: _____

Address: _____

Phone (cell/home): _____

Phone (business): _____

Name: _____

Relation: _____

Address: _____

Phone (cell/home): _____

Phone (business): _____

Notes

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