

BRSS TACS

Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER STRATEGY

TIP SHEET 2

Disaster Preparedness Tips for Individuals with Mental Illness or Substance Use Disorder and Their Families

Most of us don't like to think about the possibility of fires, floods, hurricanes, or other disasters damaging our communities or our homes. However, there are a few simple steps we can take to protect ourselves and our loved ones from disaster, and most of them are inexpensive or free. This tip sheet introduces you to steps you can take to prepare for an approaching disaster.

Planning: Steps You Can Take When a Disaster Is Heading Toward Your Community or Home

Develop a Plan



Go over the disaster plan with your whole family so that everyone knows and understands the action steps they will need to take.



Watch or listen to news reports on the television and radio and pay close attention to alerts from [the National Weather Service](http://www.weather.gov) (www.weather.gov). Doing this will help you decide what action steps to take to evacuate your home or shelter-in-place.



Be prepared to evacuate your home by finding the [locations of the nearest shelters](http://www.ready.gov/shelter) (www.ready.gov/shelter). You can also

- text SHELTER along with your five-number zip code to 4FEMA; or
- use the [Red Cross's search tool](http://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/find-an-open-shelter.html) (www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/find-an-open-shelter.html).



Pet owners can use [Petfinder's Shelter Center](http://www.petfinder.com/animal-shelters-and-rescues/) (www.petfinder.com/animal-shelters-and-rescues/) to find a safe place for animals to stay. To find volunteers who may be able to care for pets, visit [Red Rover](http://www.redrover.org) (www.redrover.org) or call them at 800-440-3277.



Preparing for Medication Safety and Accessibility

Why is it important?

- People who are taking psychotropic medications such as anti-anxiety medications or anti-psychotic medications, are at an increased risk of experiencing withdrawal symptoms if medications are stopped abruptly.
- Similarly, people receiving methadone treatment may experience withdrawal symptoms if treatment is stopped suddenly as well.

Medication-Assisted Treatment

- If you are receiving medication-assisted treatment (MAT) at a nearby opioid treatment program (OTP), contact your local authorities for information on potential traffic control or road closures. Local authorities can provide you with guidance on alternative routes to the OTP if they are open. Note: Account for increased travel time with road blocks, especially if there are power outages.
- Contact your OTP where you currently receive treatment to see if they have a mutual aid agreement with a neighboring OTP where you may be able to receive guest dosing services if your site needs to temporarily close.
- Confirm your OTP's protocol for informing people if it needs to close or change its hours of operation.

Communicate



Help children or other sensitive people in your family by

- making sure they don't see frightening images or hear scary reports of disaster;
- being aware of your own reactions to events; and
- reassuring them that the family is prepared.



Contact friends and family outside of your area to let them know about the disaster warning and what authorities are telling you to do.

Start Taking Action



Make sure your car's gas tank is full in case you must evacuate.



Gather materials from your emergency supply kit, including the copies of important papers you have stored in your freezer. That way, you will be ready to leave your home or shelter-in-place quickly.



If you have a generator, make sure it has enough gas to work for several days.



Secure your home. Strengthen weak spots, clear yard debris, etc. If you do not have wind and impact resistant windows, close hurricane shutters, nail plywood over windows, and tape window glass.

This is one of a series of four tips sheets on disaster preparedness. The other titles in this series include:

- **Tip Sheet 1**—Just in Case: Steps You Can Take at Any Time to Increase Your Disaster Preparedness
- **Tip Sheet 3**—Taking Action: Steps You Can Take During or Following a Disaster
- **Tip Sheet 4**—Forms and Checklists to Guide You During a Disaster



Medication Tips

- Keep medications in original containers with original labels, then put the containers in plastic bags and close them completely to prevent water damage.
- Make copies of doctors' phone numbers, health insurance cards, and prescription cards. Write down the name, strength, dosage, and instructions for taking for each medication. Remember to include the name of the doctor who wrote the prescription along with the name of the treatment program where you are receiving treatment, if applicable.
- If medications need to be kept cold, be sure to buy coolers and ice before stores run out.

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Please share your thoughts, feedback, and questions about this publication by emailing BRSSSTACS@c4innovates.com. Your feedback will help SAMHSA develop future products.