Tornado Preparedness for Persons with Disabilities or Access and Functional Needs

No individual who sees or experiences a disaster is untouched by it, and Persons with access and functional needs face additional challenges. Planning ahead can make all the difference.

Before a Tornado
- Create a disaster plan. More information is available at dhs.in.gov/2779.htm.
- Plan ahead if transportation or assistance may be needed for an evacuation.
- If medical equipment is used and requires electricity, talk to a health expert about how to prepare during a power outage.
- Wear a medical alert tag or bracelet.
- Identify safe rooms, storm shelters or potential protective locations.
  - Safe rooms are structures specifically designed to provide near-absolute protection in extreme weather.
- Assemble an emergency disaster kit. More information is available at dhs.in.gov/2783.htm.

When Tornado Begins
- When a tornado warning is issued, seek shelter immediately!
- Once inside a protective space, get under a table or desk and cover the head and neck. Also try to cover the body with a coat or blanket.

If Getting to a Lower Level Safe Room Is Not Possible
- Go to a small interior windowless room.
  - Example: closet, interior hallway or any space that is away from corners, windows and doors.
- NOTE: Most injuries associated with high winds are from flying debris, so remember to protect the head and neck.

Once the Tornado Stops
- Always check for injuries. If trapped, do not try to move, as it can make the area unstable.
  - Tap on a wall, pipe or use a whistle if available, until located.
- If power is out, use flashlights or battery powered lanterns. Candles can ignite debris.
- Identify damage made during tornado in order to make filing an insurance claim easier.

For more information on how to plan for tornado preparedness:
Visit GetPrepared.IN.gov
Situation-Specific Safety Considerations

Persons who have a Physical Disability or Movement Limitations
- Accessing a lower-level safe room may be difficult for persons who have mobility or balance limitation. Identify a protective space on each floor of the home.
- If in a wheelchair, keep the following in mind:
  - Lock wheels and try to remain seated in a designated area.
  - Use both arms to cover the head and neck.

Persons Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- Prior to a tornado, identify and practice multiple ways to receive warnings, as well as evacuation information, such as:
  - A weather radio with text display and a flashing alert.
  - Extra hearing aid batteries if a hearing aid is required.
  - Keep a pen and paper nearby for receiving and communicating information.

Persons Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired
- Due to the disruption of the tornado, regular sound clues used to move around easier might not be present.
- Move with caution – shuffle feet and try taking small steps to reduce the likelihood of falling.
- Keep any necessary communications device as part of an emergency supply kit.

Persons Who Have a Developmental/Cognitive or Intellectual Disability
- Keep a simple written or visual checklist of what to do and important information in safety kit.
- If communication equipment is not working, plan how to communicate with other items such as, laminated cards or phrases.
- Practice emergency plans (getting to a protective space) in advance.

Persons Who Have a Service Animal
- Keep license and ID tags on service animal at all times.
- Keep copies of the animal’s health records, animal certification and veterinarian contact information.
- Maintain instructions on how to care for the service animal, as well as a photo in the event separation occurs.

Consideration for Refrigerated Medication
- Keep at least a week-long supply of prescription medicines, along with a list of the dosages and any allergies. Talk to a doctor about possible alternative medication in place of refrigerated medication to have on hand in the event of an emergency.
- If medications require refrigeration and it is not available due to power outage or other issues consider using the freezer or a small insulated cooler with cold packs.
- When being evacuated, notify first responders about refrigerated medications as soon as possible.