



# People with Special Needs in an Emergency

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## Fact Sheet

### Who is a person with a "special need"?

For the thousands of St. Mary's County citizens with special needs, responding to an emergency situation can be extremely challenging. People with physical, medical, sensory or cognitive disabilities are members of this group; the elderly, infants, and people with limited English proficiency will also need special considerations during a time of crisis. But with a little planning ahead of time, you can reduce potential confusion during the event.

### Special Considerations

The two main steps to emergency preparedness are creating your emergency plan and putting together your supplies kit. However, there are some additional considerations for individuals with special needs.

- If you have any necessary equipment that runs on electricity, have a plan for when there is a power outage. Notify SMECO of any needs by calling 1-888-440-3311.
- If you need assistance in leaving your home or office, know how to contact the person that helps you and discuss your plan with them ahead of time.
- Plan for a "rainy day" with an emergency cash fund.
- Know how to connect a back-up power supply for essential medical equipment.
- Teach those who may need to assist you in an emergency how to operate necessary equipment.
- Carry a cell phone. If you don't want to purchase one, the St. Mary's County Department of Aging has free cell phones that can be used to dial 9-1-1.
- Place copies of all vital records and important documents with your emergency kit.
- Have a plan for any household pets. Remember that only service animals are allowed at Red Cross shelters.
- St. Mary's County Emergency Services can notify you by phone in case of an emergency in your area. Make sure your home and/or cell phone number is in the database by registering at [www.co.saint-marys.md.us/emergencycodered.asp](http://www.co.saint-marys.md.us/emergencycodered.asp).

### File of Life

During an emergency, communicating vital information (medical history, current medications, etc.) to rescue personnel is not always possible. Having this information in your File of Life card on your refrigerator will help. Call the Health Department for your free copy.

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#### For more information:

- St. Mary's County Health Department- 301-475-4330
- St. Mary's County Department of Aging- 301-475-4200 ext.1050
- On the web: [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov), [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org), and [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)