

How Should People With Disabilities Prepare



Prepping is cumbersome for anyone, but for those who are disabled, even a simple bugout can be a challenge. Ultimately, if you or a family member is disabled, then prepping will take careful planning above and beyond what the average prepper has to deal with. There are simply so many additional things to consider, such as:

- Medications
- Necessary medical equipment – e.g. inhalers, hearing aid batteries, or portable oxygen tanks
- Mobility devices – e.g. crutches, cane, walker, or wheelchair
- Mode of transportation
- Service animals

Your ultimate goal is to ensure that you or your disabled loved one has what is required to survive the emergency situation and live as comfortably as possible in its aftermath.

Bugging In May Be Your Best Bet

Many preppers are set to bug in during less severe events, but are also ready to bug out if there is a total collapse or an event that warrants getting out of their home or the city. Unfortunately, this might not be an option for you if you or a loved one is disabled. The option to bugout will depend on the severity of the disability, the level of preparedness you have achieved in terms of stocking

up on medications and equipment, and the type of transportation to which you have access.

If you can get yourself set up for the requirements of the disability in a bugout location and have a way to get there, then you have a definite advantage. If not, the next best option is to have that setup ready at home. Having a stock of medications, equipment, and necessary supplies will allow the disabled person to continue to live at some level of comfort and then you can tend to other necessary matters, such as security, producing food, or keeping warm. Essentially, you need to be sure you have anything stocked up that you couldn't borrow from a neighbor.

If you are not equipped to keep the power running over the short- or long-term and the disabled person requires electricity to keep critical equipment running, then you might need to consider having a plan to get that person to a hospital where there are generators that will ensure life-saving equipment can continue to run.

Special Considerations

Let's take a look at the special considerations you have to take into account when prepping for yourself or someone else who has a disability. When preparing, in addition to the basic (e.g. food, water, shelter, heat) you will need to stockpile or have the following on hand and you will need to be able to handle the maintenance of all equipment.

Medications

FYI, this section applies to anyone taking prescription meds, whether or not they are disabled. Keep in mind, I am not a doctor, so be sure to consult with your physician when it comes stockpiling any medications you take.

Make a list of all required medications, the doses, and when/how often to take each one. Keep this list along with copies of any prescriptions you have been given recently and your doctor's contact information in your BOB, just in case this information is needed. Pharmacies generally stock three days' worth of prescription medication (sounds suspiciously like a grocery store, which only stocks three days of food on their shelves) and they are often a primary target for looting. For this reason, you will have to plan ahead for events that will cause a disruption in the medicine supply chain.

First and foremost, you should always have on hand a minimum of 90- to 180-days' worth of medications on hand. This should be enough to get you through most events and should be relatively easy to obtain, particularly if you have a doctor you can trust. Just discuss having an extra supply of meds on hand and be honest with your doctor.

Now, here are some *legal* options for getting extra medications to store away beyond that initial supply:

- If the medical condition allows for it, skipping medication doses by taking every other one, cutting doses in half, or even skipping one dose per week will help create a stockpile
- Plan a trip (which could be considered bugging out) and ask your doctor or a travel clinic for extra refills to cover you while you're away
- If you travel overseas and can see a doctor during your visit, you might be able to get a prescription and have it filled there and then you can bring back with you; a three-month supply is usually allowed through by customs, provided it is in its original packaging, is accompanied by the prescription, and it is for personal use for a serious condition
- Buying medications without a prescription is illegal, but border security will often allow medications from international online pharmacies that don't require prescriptions as long as they are for personal use and in three-month supplies

Aside from stockpiling prescription medications, search for natural alternatives, which might include homeopathic medicines and other natural treatments, such as herbal remedies. These can be a life-saver (quite literally!) when all other options have run out and they are perfectly legal to store up.

Equipment

Let's discuss mobility equipment along with all other equipment here. First, let's talk about mobility equipment. Be sure to:

- Always maintain the equipment to ensure proper working condition.
- Have a way to keep all batteries charged if electricity fails. A solar charger is a good option. Just be sure that you have a higher wattage charger or solar panel to ensure you can fully charge your batteries. A low wattage solar charger or panel will only maintain a charge or slow its drain.
- Have a backup mobility device, if possible (extra canes, walkers, wheelchairs). It is wise to have a non-electric backup, such as a folding wheelchair. This is particularly important if you have to bugout at some point and the vehicle used cannot take a large piece of equipment. A folding wheelchair and similar folding equipment can fit in the trunk.
- You should keep spare mobility equipment in a separate out building whenever possible, in case the primary equipment is damaged in some way (e.g. crushed during an earthquake).
- A blind or vision-impaired person who uses a cane (with or without a service animal) should keep a spare cane, even the telescoping kind.
- Whenever you replace an older piece of equipment, such as a walker, wheelchair, dentures, eye glasses, or prosthetic limbs, keep the old equipment as backup, provided it still functions properly and is not a safety risk. Even if these don't fit as well or feel as comfortable as the newer equipment, they will get you by when these types of items can't be replaced immediately.
- Have ramps and pathways that make it easy to get around inside and outside the house

If you need something like oxygen tanks or equipment designed to help with breathing or deliver

medication, then like the meds themselves, discuss with your doctor about having an extra supply on hand. You might not be able to stock up for many months, but even a month or two of extra and a rotation of supplies might keep you good to go for three to six months.

Transportation

If you do plan on bugging out or you think it is possible you might need to get the disabled person to a hospital, then you need to have a vehicle at your disposal that will accommodate that person. If you don't, then you will be staying put. Many people can manage to travel in a regular car or truck. Only extremely disabled people might need a special van or bus with a wheelchair ramp. Have a plan to ensure you have your bases covered.

It's also important not to wait until the last minute to evacuate. It would be far better to move grandma to a safe location early on, such as a nice warm hotel room, than be stuck with her and the rest of the family in a lineup of traffic that isn't moving when everyone else is trying to get out of Dodge.

The best thing to do is make a plan (although, to be honest, any prepper should have a bugout plan and practice it). You might have a plan in your head and think the bugout will take an hour, only to find it there are kinks in the plan and it takes you four hours. Consider all the scenarios:

- Will you be able to bugout using a vehicle?
- Will you be on foot?
- Can you redistribute the weight of the BOBs?
- Does the disabled person have any mobility? Is he or she able to help or will you be pushing a wheelchair down the highway on your own?
- Could you carry the disabled person if necessary?
- Can the disabled person handle the stress of bugging out?

Plan, test your plan, alter your plan, and test it again. Repeat this until you have your plan down, you know precisely what you are doing, and it will go off without a hitch.

The Need for a Caregiver or Living Alone

In many, perhaps even most situations, a disabled person has family and friends to depend on in times of need. However, there are times when that person is alone or is dependent on a caregiver that is not necessarily a trusted prepping companion. In these situations, it can be difficult. There are still things you can do to help yourself. You can ask your caregiver to:

- Buy a few extra groceries each time they shop for you, and you will build a stock of food and water gradually, perhaps without the caregiver even realizing it
- Help you put in a small garden or grow vegetables in pots

- Help you make the necessary alterations to your home environment to make it easier for you to manage on your own

It is also important to build a community of people to help you during emergencies or tough times. If you do not have family or close friends nearby, try to connect with people in your neighborhood, coworkers, and others in your life who can help you when things get rough.

Prepping with a Service Animal

If you or a disabled loved one has a service animal, then you will also need to prepare for their wellbeing. It's much the same as prepping for a pet, except your service animal is so much more important for your own safety and survival. You need to be sure you have food, water, and medicines stocked up for your service animal. Chances are, your service animal is a dog, so be sure to have extra collars and leashes stored away. Since it is a service animal, he or she is already extremely well-trained, but you will need to ensure that training includes what to do in emergency situations, such as:

- Providing protection
- Being desensitized to strange noises and smells, such as the sound of gun fire and the smell of smoke
- Providing additional services, such as pulling carts and carrying packs
- Helping, rather than endangering you in a survival situation

A Word about Mental Preparedness

Planning ahead will help alleviate stress when critical events happen that disrupt our lives. Having the medications and medical equipment stocked up, along with all of the food, water, and other supplies will certainly help set your mind at ease. Aside from this, you can do the following:

- Educate yourself on alternative/natural medicines
- Educate yourself on all signs/symptoms of illnesses and ailments that are related to the disability in question
- Take emergency medical training and get as advanced a level of training as you can

All of these measures will help minimize the stress of what will already be a stressful situation.

You CAN Prepare with a Disability

Chances are you have already made changes in your home environment due to the disability of yourself or your loved one. You have already made that home one that the disabled person can comfortably live in, get around in, and in which they can continue to do the same things they

always did. Even a large property or a farm can be altered to allow the disabled person to get around, do chores, and be relatively independent. Just work to get all these things in place and take care of what we discussed above and you will be that much further ahead in the preparedness game.