

Putting *s.a.f.e.t.y. first*: Expert Tips For Safe Evacuations



(NAPSA)—In the event of an emergency, people must be prepared to safely evacuate—including the one in five Americans affected by a disability.

In response, Easter Seals created *s.a.f.e.t.y. first: working together for safer communities*. The new community-based outreach program helps raise awareness about personalized planning for people with disabilities and provides proper planning tools and resources. Across the country, Easter Seals is teaming up with people with disabilities, employers, building owners and managers, local police, fire and emergency medical service professionals to create solutions that meet the needs of people with disabilities in their communities.

There are several steps that we can take right now to make safe evacuations a reality, especially for people with disabilities. Easter Seals encourages everyone to consider these *s.a.f.e.t.y. first* tips when preparing for an evacuation:

- **START** preparing an evacuation plan now. If you have a disability, identify yourself to building managers and the fire department and help devise an effective emergency procedure. People of all abilities must be equally prepared for an emergency evacuation.

- **ASK** family, friends and co-workers with physical and mental disabilities about their personal evacuation concerns and needs. Keep in mind that the needs of pregnant women, older adults,

and people with injuries or illnesses are similar to those with disabilities.

- **FIND** “buddies.” Whether at work, the movies, or a sporting event, people with and without disabilities often need assistance in the event of an emergency or evacuation.

- **EVALUATE** the area. Pre-determine and practice evacuation routes. Be sure that “buddies” know how to operate any special equipment needed to evacuate safely.

- **TEST** smoke detectors, public announcement systems, fire extinguishers, flashlights, etc., to ensure they work. Make sure alternate alert systems are available for individuals with special needs (especially for people with vision or hearing disabilities).

- **YOU** can help Easter Seals by making this important issue top-of-mind in the community—talk to business leaders, building management, government officials, police and fire departments.

“For more than 80 years, Easter Seals has worked to make our communities accessible for everyone,” said James E. Williams, president and CEO of Easter Seals. “Today, we face a different challenge—making sure that people with disabilities are never in a position of being left behind.”

To learn more about how to implement the *s.a.f.e.t.y. first* program, visit www.easter-seals.org or call the toll-free number 1-866-BE-SAFE-5.