



# Special Assistance Considerations

[www.ocfa.org](http://www.ocfa.org)

## Addressing the Needs of Those with Disabilities Facing a Fire

Approximately 4,000 Americans die and 20,000 are injured in fires each year. Those with disabilities are at an even greater risk as they may be limited in movement or reaction time for such an event. However, failed emergency evacuation deaths can be prevented by following the steps provided in preparation for such disasters.

### Install and Maintain Smoke Alarms

Have smoke alarms installed outside all sleeping areas and on every level of your home. Test your smoke alarms once a month and change your batteries twice a year. Make sure your alarms are appropriate and effective. Smoke alarms with a vibrating pad or flashing light are available for the deaf or hard of hearing. Additionally, smoke alarms with a strobe light outside the house to catch the attention of neighbors, and emergency call systems for summoning help are also available.



*To be considered disabled under either ADA or 504, a person must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment.*

### Plan Your Escape

Make a home exit plan and be sure to practice it! Know two ways out of your room. If you use a wheelchair or walker, be certain that doors and hallways have ample room to accommodate them and that appropriate ramps and hand rails are installed. Make sure windows and doors open easily. Sleep and live near exits on the ground floor to make your escape easier. Be sure to practice your plan with those who have agreed to be part of your personal support network. Inform your employer and co-workers about your disability and let them know specifically what assistance you will need in an emergency. This is particularly important if you need to be lifted or carried. Talk about communication difficulties, physical limitations, equipment instructions and medication procedures.

## Don't Isolate Yourself

- Create your own personal support network by identifying others who will help you in an emergency. This should include family, friends, care providers, neighbors, and/or those who will be able to assist you during or after a fire.
- Inform everyone about how you plan to evacuate your home, school or workplace, and where you will go in case of a disaster.
- Ensure that someone in your personal support network knows how to use any lifesaving equipment or administer medicine in case of an emergency.
- Keep a copy of your plan in your emergency supply kits and a list of important information and contacts in your wallet.
- Wear medical alert tags or bracelets to help identify your disability.
- Ask emergency providers to keep your special needs information on file.



## BE PREPARED TO SHELTER IN PLACE!

Be sure to sleep with your doors closed. When alarm goes off, check the door with the back of your hand before opening. If your door is too hot, or you cannot evacuate, you may have to stay in your room and wait for a firefighter to come for you. Be sure to keep emergency supplies, such as a flashlight, by your bed. Place damp towels or sheets in the bottom crack of your closed door. Place bright colored cloth in your window to signal firefighters of your location. Have a list of emergency numbers and phone by the side of your bed to call out for help.

### For More Information

Orange County Fire Authority  
(714) 573-6200  
[www.ocfa.org](http://www.ocfa.org)

National Fire Protection Association  
[www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)

United States Fire Administration  
[www.usfa.dhs.gov](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov)

Disability Preparedness Resource  
Center  
[www.disabilitypreparedness.gov](http://www.disabilitypreparedness.gov)

### Know Your Abilities!

**Fire safety starts with you!**

**Be responsible for  
acquiring and maintaining  
the help and tools you need!**