



Iowa's information and referral service on disability services, assistive technology (AT), AT funding resources, and AT legal advocacy.

Disability Information & Referral
Connecting People to Programs

A PROGRAM OF THE CENTER FOR DISABILITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

Iowa COMPASS News

March is Flood Awareness Month in Iowa Are you ready? Stay Informed, Make a Plan, Get a Kit

This year, officials with the National Weather Service (NWS) predict a high risk of significant flooding in Iowa through May. The Iowa, Cedar, Skunk, Des Moines, Racoon, Nishnabotna, Thompson and Chariton rivers are being watched.

This is partly due to all the snow we've had this winter—150% to 200% more than normal. In addition, the low temps have caused the snow to stay deeper for longer than usual. So, when it finally warms up this spring, we might be in trouble. When you combine fast spring warm ups with lots of rain, flooding becomes a threat.

To see the full NWS reports go to: [National Weather Service Weather Forecast Office](#) in Des Moines.



NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Are You Ready?

Spring time in Iowa is also the start of tornado season. If you or a family member has a disability, it is important to plan ahead for emergencies. Why do you need to get ready? Will there be people to help you? It is estimated that there is only 1 emergency service person for every 1000 citizens. That number can be reduced by illness, vacation, and different work shifts. There are not enough public services and responders to help everyone. It can take up to 3 days for services and resources to get into place after a disaster. That includes programs like the Red Cross. Everyone needs to plan to do as much for themselves as possible. You should also be ready to take care of yourself for 3 days. *Having no plan is not a good plan!!*

Consider some of the following action steps:

Flood Insurance: Spring is a good time to consider insurance. That is when you have the most risk. When you buy flood insurance, it takes up to 30 days to go into effect.

The average flood insurance premium is a little more than \$500 a year. Homes outside the flood plain can get it for a lot less. The amount will vary with the level of risk for a flood loss. Your home's location and the level of risk will also impact the amount of coverage and the type of coverage you need. Officials from the disaster agencies would like the number of flood insurance policies to go up.

You can get flood insurance for a home or business directly from a property and casualty insurance agent if your community is part of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). To find out which towns and cities are in the program, visit www.iid.state.ia.us. For more information about the National Flood Insurance Program, visit the NFIP Web site at www.floodsmart.gov.



Document Your Home and Property: During recovery after a flood, tornado or any disaster, you will need to prove what you had before. Besides your car, furniture and household goods, be sure to include your assistive technology devices and home modifications. You can take pictures or video of your home's special features. Take photos of things like ramps, lifts, or adapted bathroom features. Pictures and receipts will show you owned things like wheelchairs, walkers, shower chairs, adapted telephones and alerting devices, communication devices, dressing aids, grab bars, standing aids, and adapted eating utensils. Be sure your receipts or pictures are in a safe dry place. It's good to get either a fire/water proof safe or use a deposit box at a bank. If not, your plan should include taking these things with you when you leave the house.

Stay informed: Be sure to follow the news so you know what is happening in your town and neighborhood. Your local newspaper, TV and radio stations will tell you about flood risk. When the sirens go off, check your TV or radio and seek shelter right away. Get a NOAA radio if you cannot hear town sirens. This radio will come on and alert you to any watches or warnings. You may need to purchase alerting devices for the NOAA radio to signal you when there is an alert.

- **Watch** = weather conditions that might develop into a severe thunderstorm or tornado. To help you remember think, "you are *watching* the weather."
- **Warning** = a tornado or severe thunderstorm has been sighted. You are being "warned" to take cover or go to a safe place.

Make a Plan: What are you going to do if your home gets flooded? What are you going to do if you have to leave your home and go to a safe place? What will you do if your house is damaged, and you have to leave it after the storm? Think about:

- *When will I move my things?* This of course depends on how much you want to gamble. Yes, you may move things early and then not be flooded, but if you wait too long there may not be enough time or anyone to help you.
- *Who can help me move?* In addition to your family and friends, think about people you know from your work, neighborhood, and church. If they can't help you, maybe they can connect you to someone else.
- *Where will I store my stuff?* There are rental storage units, but be sure they are not in the flood area. Or, you could use mobile storage that you can move to a safe area. You might need to move things to a family or friend's home.
- *What should I take?* If you have enough time, you may be able to protect all or some of your furniture and other household items. The Iowa Department of Public Health brochure suggests you take originals or copies of important documents. These are the papers you need to replace or recover of lost items: insurance cards, prescriptions or at least a list of your medicines, marriage certificates, guardianship papers, and contact information for your family,

friends, and service providers.

- *How will I get my medicine and devices after the disaster?* It is especially important to plan how you will take along your medicines, medical supplies, and AT devices. If your AT gets lost or damaged, it will take time to replace. This may mean you will lose your independence and safety. Remember to think of all the devices you use for mobility, communication, dressing, eating, bathing and hygiene. Remember extra batteries or a charger. Some of your backup devices may be lower tech. You may need to use a manual wheelchair instead of a power one. If you have speech or hearing impairments you might have paper/pen, dry erase board or picture board instead of an electric device. You can download English and Spanish picture boards from the IPAT's sister program in Pennsylvania at the [Institute on Disabilities](#).
- *How will I get to a safe place if there is a tornado?* First, be sure you know where to go in your home or complex. If you cannot get there on your own, make a plan for who can help you? What else can you do to be as safe as possible?
- *Where will I go if I have to leave my home for hours, days, or weeks?* Radio and TV news will let you know about community shelters. Remember they only provide very basic services. You will be more independent and comfortable if you can stay at someone's home. You do need to talk to them ahead of time to be sure they and their home can meet your needs and accommodations. Have several options in case some of them are also in the disaster area.
- *How will I get there?* If you are not able to transport yourself, you will need to plan and arrange it. Remember that public transportation or para-transit will be very busy before and during the actual disaster. Or, it may not be running at all. Leave early and set up other transport.
- *What about my pets or service animal?* It is very important to include your pets in your plan. That way you can leave your home and not put yourself at risk because you don't want to leave them behind.
- A service dog will be able to go with you to a public disaster shelter. This is part of the ADA regulations. However, shelters do not have to accept pets, therapy animals, and other service animals. Your community may set up a disaster kennel. But like you, your pet will be happier and more comfortable if it can go with you to the home of a friend. Be sure to plan how your pet will get there.

Get a Kit: A disaster kit will allow you to stay at home for up to 3 days or you can take it along with you to a shelter or other home. The web sites listed have ideas for what should be in your kit. Be sure to have a kit for your pet or service animal too with at least 3 days of food, water, and important records.

Remember having “no plan” is not a good plan when it comes to disasters. If you want to learn more check out the following links:

[Iowa Department of Public Health, Preparing for Disaster, I Guide for Persons with Disabilities.](#)

[Ready America](#)

[American Red Cross](#) or this [American Red Cross PDF for Persons with Disabilities](#)

UERS USED EQUIPMENT REFERRAL SERVICE

from Iowa COMPASS, a program of the Center for Disabilities and Development



Do you know of adapted equipment not being used?

Do you need equipment but there's just no way to afford items from a vendor or store?

Then call Iowa **COMPASS** because **UERS** is a **FREE** service for buying and selling used adapted equipment.



It's as simple as a phone call to
800-779-2001

Or log on to
www.iowacompass.org
and look for the UERS link

877-686-0032
(toll-free TTY)





The **COMPASS** newsletter is online at www.iowacompass.org/

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