



**Los Angeles Police Department
Counter-Terrorism and Special Operations Bureau**

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
BULLETIN**

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Prepared by Emergency Operations Division

**CONSIDERATIONS DURING AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE FOR
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND OTHERS WITH ACCESS AND
FUNCTIONAL NEEDS**



It is the requirement of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) to provide evacuation assistance during an emergency to all community members. During the evacuation it may be necessary to utilize alternative means of communicating with and assisting people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. This bulletin has been created in order to educate officers on how to effectively communicate and identify what measures to take to ensure successful evacuations. Officers are encouraged to disseminate the information contained in this bulletin at community meetings and to community members engaged in emergency preparedness efforts.

Disasters frequently create new physical and communication barriers and eliminate and/or lessen services available to everyone. For people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, this creates the potential for everyday obstacles to become even more problematic and possibly even life threatening during an emergency.

Under any stressful circumstance, community members may respond in various ways to the stress and stimulus caused by panic, fear, injury and worry. Officers may encounter people who do not immediately respond to direction and should frequently assess an individual's ability to respond to instruction. To facilitate the best possible outcome for all, officers are to actively look for the means needed to communicate with all community members and should utilize the following initial steps:

1. Announce presence.
2. Articulate the need, plan, and directions for the evacuation or other necessary action.

Considerations During An Emergency Response for People with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs

3. Ask how to best assist the person.
4. If an individual is deaf or hard of hearing, utilize written communication, pictograms or mobile devices to ensure the individual understands the message.

During an emergency it may be necessary for officers to conduct a door-to-door evacuation. The utilization of a variety of communication and attention getting techniques will enhance the ability of the LAPD to effectively evacuate community members in an area. Officers should utilize the ringing of doorbells, door knocking, vehicle Public Address System (P.A.), helicopter P.A., flashing of vehicle headlights and flashlights to gain the attention of people within the involved area, including warning them to evacuate and directing them to the "initial evacuation site/center." Officers should also utilize attention getting vibration/movement such as the striking of a baton on a metal security gate to gain attention and tools such as picture boards, pictograms, writing tablets, written materials, pamphlets, communication boards, and video-text displays (if available) as alternative ways to communicate. Additionally, for incidents requiring mass evacuation of an area, the Incident Commander will order an electronic mass notification through RACR.

If time permits, officers should make a record of each contact or no-answer on a Field Interview Report (FI) (Form 15.43.00). Ask neighbors about any people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, including children and older adults, who may not have responded to a door knock in order to ascertain if there are people who require assistance to evacuate. Ensure transportation requests include accessible transportation, consider the types of facilities that have been evacuated and their transportation requirements, such as a hospital, assisted living facility or nursing home, and request additional buses with wheelchair access, as needed. If the need arises for specific resources for an evacuation, such as an ambulance or medical staff or the LAFD Access and Functional Needs Task Force, officers shall immediately notify the Evacuation Branch Manager or the Operations Section Chief of the situation. Ask evacuees if they need assistance transporting items such as medications, durable medical equipment or service animals, note that information on the FI card and ensure that the information is communicated to the Evacuation Branch Director. If the Evacuation Branch is not activated, report the information to the Operations Section Chief.

Note: Refer to the Evacuation Checklist for Control Objectives, Incident Commander Tasks and Notifications, located in Volume 2 of the Emergency Operations Guide (EOG).

Considerations During an Emergency Response or Evacuation
Ask and Look For The Following:

- Access requirements for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs when requesting transportation during an evacuation.
- Contact information.
- Ask if any neighbors may need assistance.
- An identification bracelet with health information.
- Essential equipment and supplies such as:
 - Mobility aids, including white canes, wheelchairs and portable walkers.
 - Oxygen tanks and extra batteries.
 - Hearing aids and cochlear implants.
 - Portable or emergency generators for lifesaving devices.

Considerations During An Emergency Response for People with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs

- **Note:** All durable medical equipment, assistive technology, essential equipment and service animals should, absent compromised life safety, be taken with people who depend on these devices.
- Medications – consider allergy medications including EPI-PENS.
- Service Animals.
 - Absent compromised life safety, service animals must be transported with an evacuated individual
 - Bring pet supply kit with a leash or harness (most service animals will have them for travel).
- File of Life – This program, administered by the Los Angeles Department of Aging, encourages people who are elderly to keep updated records such as medications, including dosage, frequency, etc.
- People may have sensory, mobility or physical disabilities that are not necessarily regulated to the use of durable medical equipment. Some people with mobility or physical disabilities may be able to go up and down stairs but have trouble with operating door locks, latches, and other devices due to disabilities of their hands and arms. Officers should ensure the facilitation of their evacuation.

Communication and Assistance Considerations:

- Ask the individual which communication methods work best for them.
- Communication tools, including:
 - Pictograms and storyboards.
 - Pen and paper to clearly print information.
 - White boards.
 - Create flyers with general instructions in large font.
 - Sign language – may benefit from the assistance of family members in exigent circumstances.
 - If available, Department-issued Smart Phones or tablets with language interpreting capabilities can be used for translation needs. Also, officers can use the LA City's emergency language translation bank by contacting LAPD's Communications Division via cell phone or Department Radio.
 - Google Translation or Smart Phone Applications, Augmentative Communications Device, or any other technologies may assist in communication.
- Look for signs of stress and/or confusion (The person may say he or she is stressed, look confused, withdrawn, or start rubbing their hands together).
- Conditions that officers may misinterpret (e.g., mistaking a person with Cerebral Palsy for drunkenness).
- If an individual is blind or visually impaired it is important for officers to identify themselves and to state clearly and completely any directions or instructions, including any information that is posted visually. If the need arises to escort a person that requires assistance, ask the person to take the officers arm at the elbow, officers will need to thoroughly describe the surroundings and what is occurring. In the event of exigent circumstances, the officer should explain to the person the reason why the officer is utilizing a different guiding technique. The officer needs to describe the surroundings and what is occurring.
- Assisting a person who is blind or low vision:
 - Offer the person an arm or allow the person to place a hand on your shoulder and assist the person to/through the evacuation route.

Considerations During An Emergency Response for People with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs

- Be sure to mention stairs, doorways, narrow passages, and ramps.
- When guiding to a seat, place the person's hand on the back of the chair.
- If leading several individuals at the same time, ask them to hold each other's arms.

Spoken Communication:

- Reassurances - "You may feel afraid. That's ok. We're safe now."
- Encouragement - "Thanks for moving fast. You are doing great."
- Frequent updates on what's happening and what will happen next - "Just like I said before, we're getting into the van now and next ..."

Written communication:

First responders should understand the following when using written instructions during an emergency:

- Keep instructions simple.
- Use present tense.
- Print in clear format.
- Write in short sentences.
- Use short, simple words.
- Ask the person if they need any assistance.
- Tell the person what to do.
- Give them an idea of what to expect.
- Be aware that not everyone can read or understand English .
- Google Translation or Smart Phone Applications, Augmentative Communications Device, or any other technologies may assist in communication and translations.

It may be necessary to evacuate and individual in a wheelchair.

The following is guidance on "in-chair" wheelchair evacuation:

One-Person Assist

- Grasp the pushing grips, if the wheelchair has them.
- Stand one step above and behind the wheelchair.
- Tilt the wheelchair backward until a balance (fulcrum) is achieved.
- Keep your center of gravity low.
- Descend frontward.
- Let the back wheels gradually lower to the next step.
- If possible, have another person assist you.

Two-Person Assist

- Positioning of second rescuer:
 - Stand in front of wheelchair.
 - Face the wheelchair.
 - Stand one, two, or three steps down (dependent on height of the rescuer).
- Grasp the frame of the wheelchair.
- Push into the wheelchair.
- Descend stairs backward.

Three-Person Assist

- Position for second and third rescuers:
- Face direction of descent.
- Flank the wheelchair.
- Stay in line with the two front (smaller) wheels.
- Stand one step/tread lower than rescuer behind wheelchair.
- Grasp the frame of the wheelchair.
- Push into the wheelchair

Safeguarding lives and property of the people we serve is our primary objective. While often pressured by time constraints and limited resources during emergency situations, officers should be prepared to aid those community members that require additional assistance. Deviation from these basic concepts may occur due to life threatening or life safety issues that may occur during emergency situations. This document is a guide to aid officers in making the best possible decisions with consideration for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, as a full spectrum approach to evacuations. Any information collected shall be conveyed in accordance with the Incident Command System.

Any questions regarding the content of this bulletin should be directed to the Emergency Preparedness Unit, Emergency Operations Division at (213) 486-5730.

Additional tips for communicating and assisting people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs may be found at <http://disabilitytips.tamu.edu> or on other websites or smart phone applications. Officers are encouraged to utilize additional resources.