Safe and Equal in EMErgencies (SEE ME)

What to do in the event of floods, earthquakes and wildfires and declared protective measures

# PREPARE FOR DISASTERS

Natural disasters can happen anywhere, at any time.

Some occur without warning, whereas others can be predicted.

It is important that deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind people and their family members and personal assistants are also prepared for emergencies.

Find out what you can do in an emergency and where you will need help, especially if you are alone.

Before an emergency:

* Identify whether you live in an area at risk from floods, earthquakes or wildfires;
* Get instructions on how to prepare for, deal with and recover from emergencies. The instructions are available at the following internet site of the [Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief](https://www.gov.si/podrocja/obramba-varnost-in-javni-red/varstvo-pred-naravnimi-in-drugimi-nesrecami/napotki-prebivalcem-ob-nesrecam/).
* Carry out preventive measures as far as you are able;
* Be aware that protective measures may be declared in the event of certain emergencies, for example evacuation; reception and care for populations at risk; and nuclear, biological and chemical protection;
* Find out possible ways to contact 112;
* You can assess the seismic resistance of a building (using the [POTROG app](http://potrog2.vokas.si/)).

If people with disabilities cannot get informed by themselves, they should be helped by relatives, parents, children, caretakers, personal assistants, etc., in an appropriate way and through an appropriate means of communication. This should not cause panic. People with disabilities can get in touch with their umbrella organizations or associations. Deaf and hard of hearing people can also communicate with the help of a call centre for people with hearing impairments ([the Association of Slovenian Sign Language Interpreters](http://www.tolmaci.si/)); the call centre enables people with hearing impairments to contact doctors, public administration and all public institutions. The call centre operates 24 hours a day and is accessible to registered users via SMS messages, email, web chat, video call via computer, and video call via telephone network.

# PREPARE THE THINGS YOU WILL NEED DURING AN EMERGENCY

In the event of a major emergency, it may happen that:

* The assistance of emergency services is not immediately available;
* Electricity and natural gas supplies are disrupted;
* The water supply is disrupted or the water is not safe to drink;
* The sewerage system is damaged and therefore unusable;
* The heating system you normally use does not work or is not safe to use;
* Landlines, mobile phones and the internet do not work;
* Access to shops, pharmacies, doctor’s surgeries, etc. is blocked.

It is important to prepare things that you will need. Consider your needs and the needs of your family members.

Prepare:

* Food and water supplies: take into account the dietary habits of you and your family members (diets, allergies, baby food, etc.). You should also stock up on food and water for your pets;
* Toiletries;
* First aid kit;
* Medicines you need to take regularly;
* Warm clothing and sturdy footwear;
* Copies of your documents;
* The devices you use (hearing aid, etc.);
* Extra batteries for devices that give visual or sensory warnings;
* A battery-powered torch and extra batteries;
* Anything else you think you might need.

Make a list of important phone numbers (relatives, people who help you, doctor, etc.).

If you use customized technical devices, such as a lighted doorbell, smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms, check their functioning several times. If these devices do not have additional battery power, they will not work in the event of a power failure.

When you are asleep, always keep your hearing aid(s) in the same place (for example, next to your bed) so that you can reach them immediately in the event of an emergency. Consider securing the box with a Velcro strap, because in the event of an earthquake the items may move and you may not be able to find them immediately. Also keep a mobile phone charger within easy reach.

Prepare paper and pencil or a Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities card with written/printed text (I use Slovenian Sign Language. I cannot hear, etc.).

# PROTECTING YOUR HOME

Take preventive measures at home to protect your home from earthquakes, floods or wildfires. If you cannot do it yourself, ask relatives, friends or neighbours to help.

For protection against earthquakes:

* Fix furniture to a wall or other support;
* Place large or heavy items on lower shelves;
* Do not hang pictures, mirrors or sharp or breakable objects above beds and seating areas, etc.

For protection against floods:

* In rooms subject to flooding, lift furniture and other equipment off the floor;
* Consider relocating the electrical wiring;
* Floors and walls should be made of materials which are not easily damaged by water and can be cleaned and dried quickly;
* Install non-return valves on drains and pipes;
* Ensure that rainwater drains smoothly around the house, etc.

For protection against wildfires:

* Keep the surroundings of buildings tidy;
* Keep combustible materials at a safe distance;
* Remove tree branches and dry grass, etc.

# PROBLEMS IN THE EVENT OF EMERGENCIES

Think about what problems you might face in the event of an earthquake, flood or wildfire and declared protective measures.

Deaf and hard of hearing people, especially if they live alone, can (generally) have the following problems in the event of disasters:

* Getting notification of disasters, warnings, and declared protective measures;
* Difficult communication with first responders, evacuators, accommodation centre staff and decontamination workers;
* Increased ambient noise; hard of hearing people can be distracted by too many sounds;
* Difficulties with lip-reading instructions (e.g. because the first responder is wearing a helmet with a visor);
* Difficulties calling 112, etc.

# SAY YOU NEED HELP

We suggest you create a social network of people who can help you. In addition to relatives and friends, this can include neighbours, classmates and teachers at school or colleagues at work. Make them aware of your needs in an emergency, and where you keep your essentials. Agree on how they will help you in the event of an emergency and afterwards (how they will inform you of the emergency and of the warning given, how they will help with recovery, evacuation, etc.). Be aware that they may not always be available or able to reach you.

People with disabilities living in a multi-apartment building can inform the building manager or the person responsible for implementing fire safety measures that they will need help in the event of an emergency, and also what help they need.

We suggest you contact your umbrella organization or a call centre for people with hearing impairment.

# WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF DECLARED PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Protective measures such as evacuation, reception and care in accommodation facilities, or nuclear, biological and chemical protection and so on may be ordered to ensure the safety of the population. These measures may be declared before an emergency occurs or after the emergency has already happened.

If you must leave your home (in the event of an evacuation):

* Follow the instructions of the relevant services;
* Say you need help;
* Take the essentials you have prepared in case of an emergency; consider your needs and those of your family members.

If necessary, decontamination will be carried out. Follow the instructions of the relevant services and tell them you need help.

When you arrive at the place of accommodation, registration is carried out and basic care is provided. Tell the staff what help you need and explain your limitations. Let your relatives know where you are.

# WHAT TO DO DURING AN EMERGENCY

## Earthquakes

Stay calm!

Look for shelter under solid tables and benches, in doorframes in load-bearing walls, or along interior load-bearing walls. Squat down, bend your head to your knees, protect your head with your elbows and cover the nape of your neck with the palms of your hands.

Do not run out of the building during an earthquake! Do not use the lift or stairs and do not jump out of the window!

If you are outside, go to an open space, away from buildings, watercourse banks, trees, billboards and power lines.

In densely built-up areas where you cannot move away from buildings, look for protection from falling objects in nearby doorways.

If you are trapped in rubble after an earthquake, stay calm. If it gets dusty, cover your mouth and nose with any protective covering to hand (a handkerchief, part of your clothes). Strike an object against a metal installation or a wall at regular intervals.

If you have a mobile phone, use it, although phone networks may not necessarily work after an earthquake. Turn it off periodically and try to conserve battery power as long as possible.

## Floods

When in a flooded building, move to a higher floor.

When out in the open, move to an area that cannot be reached by the rising water.

Do not cross a watercourse, even if it only reaches up to your knees.

Keep away from the banks of watercourses.

Respect road blocks and closed underpasses. Do not drive on flooded roads.

## Wildfire

Remove objects in the building's surroundings that could catch fire.

If there is smoke in the air, close the doors and windows. Turn off ventilation and air-conditioning systems.

Water the surroundings of the house with a hose.

Stay indoors.

# WHAT TO DO AFTER AN EMERGENCY

## Earthquakes

Inspect the condition of your building and the damage to it. If the structure is damaged, do not enter.

If there is no electricity, use a battery-powered torch for lighting. Do not smoke or light matches.

In the event of disruption to the drinking water supply, follow the instructions on boiling water or use bottled water.

Have the plumbing, sewerage, gas and electrical installations and flue devices professionally inspected.

## Floods

Flooding can damage buildings, flood basements and lower floors, move furniture and equipment, and deposit mud and debris.

Inspect the condition of your building and the damage to it. Do not enter the building if it is damaged, or if the foundations are damaged or dislodged.

Pump the water from the flooded premises, and remove the debris and flooded equipment. Clean, disinfect, dry and ventilate the premises.

Clean objects that have been in contact with the floodwater. Discard items that cannot be cleaned.

Throw away food that came into contact with the floodwater.

Have the plumbing, sewerage, gas and electrical installations professionally inspected.

## Wildfire

If you have been evacuated, follow the instructions of the competent authorities on how to return to your home.

If there is still a strong smell of fire in the vicinity of the burnt area, stay out of the area or indoors.

Ventilate the building when there is no smoke or smell of smoke in the air.

Throw away food and drink that has been exposed to smoke and fire. Do not use the water/rainwater in tanks or water butts.

# GUIDELINES FOR PEOPLE WHO HELP

## Deafness, hearing impairment, deafblindness

According to the general classification, a hard of hearing person is an individual with a Fowler hearing loss of between 31% and 95% who relies on residual hearing, with or without hearing aids, lip-reading and other acoustic and psychosocial adaptations to communicate, and whose main means of communication is speech.

People who go deaf later in life are also defined as hard of hearing if they have a hearing loss of more than 95% according to Fowler, provided that speech and listening function is preserved.

The following classification of people with hearing loss is used in Slovenia:

10 to 15 dB: Normal hearing, no communication barriers.

16 to 25 dB: Slight, insignificant hearing loss; in quiet environments the person has no difficulty understanding, in noisy environments or rooms the person has difficulty understanding low speech intensities.

26 to 40 dB: Mild hearing loss; in quiet conversational situations where the topic is familiar and vocabulary is limited, the person has no difficulty communicating. Faint, quiet speech or speech at a distance is difficult to hear, even if the noise is minimal. Debates in a classroom or in a group are a communication challenge.

41 to 55 dB: Moderate hearing loss; the person hears speech only close up. Group activities, such as speaking situations in a classroom, present a communication challenge.

56 to 70 dB: Moderately severe hearing loss. The person can only hear a loud, clear speech signal. They have more problems in group situations. Speech understanding is often noticeably impaired. The speech of the hard of hearing person is also slightly impaired.

71 to 90 dB: Severe hearing loss; the person cannot hear speech unless it is very loud, but even then they cannot recognize all the words. Ambient sounds are present, but the person cannot identify them. The speech of the individual is not fully intelligible.

91 dB and above: Profound, very severe hearing loss; the person can hear individual loud sounds, but cannot perceive speech. Basic communication should be established. The speech of the individual, if developed at all, is not intelligible.

People who are deaf or hard of hearing use different ways to communicate:

* A hearing aid or hearing implant;
* Sign language;
* Lip-reading;
* Writing on paper or a phone.

People who wear hearing aids or hearing implants often use an FM system or a hearing loop to help them communicate.

FM system: the person speaking wears a transmitter with a microphone to speak into, while the person with hearing loss wears a receiver that transmits the person's speech directly into their hearing aid or implant.

Hearing loop: a system that is either installed in a room or is portable and connected to a microphone. Speech is transmitted directly from the microphone to the hearing aid or implant if it is set to "T" mode.

Deafblind people

Due to a combination of visual and hearing impairments, or the complete loss of both senses, a deafblind person's communication, access to information, and mobility are severely hampered. Deafblind people need specific support from trained individual assistants: communicator-guides and tactile signing interpreters. Deafblind people use a white cane to move around.

There are several methods for communicating with a person who is deafblind:

* Tactile language (hand position = meaning);
* Writing large letters in the palm of their hand for easy messaging;
* Use of a letter board for writing embossed letters or braille;
* Use of large print and illuminated signs for deafblind people with residual vision;
* Audio recordings for deafblind people with residual hearing.

## How to approach deaf and hard of hearing people

If a person cannot hear or does not hear well, this should not be a reason not to start a conversation with them or not help them. People with hearing loss face different challenges in their daily routines and in communicating in everyday life situations. It is important to be aware that an individual's needs vary depending on the degree of hearing loss. Ask how the person communicates.

When communicating with people who are deaf or hard of hearing, consider ethical principles and the equal status of the other party. Be respectful.

Get the person's attention. Stand in front of them in their field of view.

Find out how the person communicates.

Introduce yourself.

Describe the situation or hazard.

Ask if they need help.

Face the person and maintain eye contact.

Reduce noise and lighten the room. In the event of a power cut, a battery-powered torch can help. It is important that the person has a good view of the person they are talking to, especially of the lips and face if they communicate by lip-reading.

Speak clearly, slowly and in short sentences. Do not mumble or shout. Only one person should speak at a time.

Be expressive with body gestures and facial expressions. You can communicate a lot by pointing at an object, nodding, shaking your head and so on.

If the person does not understand what you are saying, repeat it or say it another way.

You can use your phone or take a piece of paper and write down what you want to say.

If a sign language interpreter is helping you to communicate, look at the person you are talking to, not the interpreter, as this is the best way to see how the person is feeling.

# EMERGENCY CALL 112

In EU countries, 112 is always available free of charge. If you need emergency medical assistance or help from the fire brigade, other emergency services or the police, dial 112 to tell the operator:

– **Who** is calling,

– **What** happened,

– **Where** it happened,

– **When** it happened,

– **How many** are injured,

– **What** the injuries are,

– **What** the circumstances at the scene are,

– **What** help you need.

People who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can send a text message (SMS) to 112. Explain in the message what happened and the operator will respond to it in writing. Their reply or additional questions will be displayed on the screen of your mobile device.

Data on calls and messages sent to the 112 number are stored for 6 months. Misuse of calls and messages sent to this number are punishable offences.

 

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