



Preparing for Disaster: Getting All to Safe Ground

United We Ride's (UWR)¹ Emergency Preparedness and Recovery Work Group developed this fact sheet to provide current, consistent information that addresses the needs of those with access and functional requirements in emergency preparation and disaster response. This fact sheet is intended primarily for federal program managers, those working with federal interagency coordinating councils, and those involved in federal governmental efforts so that they may be aware of vital information for inclusion in their respective publications, studies, and other outreach material.

Assisting Vulnerable Populations and Those with Access and Functional Needs

The range of disasters for which first responders and planners must prepare is great. It is critical that those who are entrusted to help the public during times of crisis know how to continue providing this assistance.

Planners and responders must be aware of the range of special needs they will encounter during a critical time or disaster such as the needs of the mobility limited (e.g. those using wheel chairs), those with limited or low proficiency in English, and the visually or hearing impaired.

Additional issues first responders and planners must take into consideration are the needs of many residents in the nation's 38 largest urbanized areas who do not own or have limited access to privately-owned vehicles. Many of these individuals are dependent upon public transit to get to and from their jobs.

Who is Involved in Disaster Response?

Public transportation plays a critical role in moving people away from the site of a disaster. Without appropriate planning that incorporates the concerns of all who need to be relocated, the response may be incomplete and some may suffer unnecessarily. When planning for disaster response and recovery, everyone involved must consider the preparation and assistance needed for those with access and functional requirements. Key actors include planners, systems operators, emergency managers, or other emergency responders as well as service providers including personal care attendants.

To prepare properly for disasters, planners need to know where to go for information, who is responsible for what functions, and how best to respond once gathering this information. The following is a list of planners who, with a better understanding of those with special needs, can assist in developing a more comprehensive response during time of crisis:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elected officials in government jurisdictions• Emergency managers• Law enforcement authority planners• Fire response planners• Emergency medical service planners• Hazardous material (HazMat) planners• Utility services and public works emergency planners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transportation planners• Medical receiver planners (e.g., hospitals)• Other metropolitan emergency planners, planning organizations, and professional organizations that represent the multiple disciplines that conduct emergency response activities• Access and Functional Needs Representatives
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¹ **United We Ride** is a federal interagency initiative aimed at improving the availability, quality, and efficient delivery of transportation services for older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes. Transportation plays a critical role in providing access to employment, health care, education, community services, and activities necessary for daily living. More information at www.unitedweride.gov.

A number of recent reports including the following provide necessary information to those who plan for or respond to a disaster.

- The 2009 National Association of Regional Councils Report (NARC) **“Streamlining Cross-Linking Transportation and Evacuation Planning: A Resource Guide for Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Regional Councils”** provides an excellent summary of emergency and evacuation publications to 2009.
http://narc.org/uploads/transportationandevacuationresourceguide_final.pdf

The Transportation Research Board (TRB) of The National Academies offers the following resources:

- The TRB Special Report, 294: **“The Role of Transit in Emergency Evacuations,”** focuses on transit systems in the nation’s 38 largest urbanized areas; a proxy for transit properties serving more than 1 million people where moving this many transit-dependent citizens/ residents requires planning. The report offers several recommendations that can enhance transit’s emergency evacuation actions.
<http://onlinepubs.trb.org/Onlinepubs/sr/sr294.pdf>
- Current TRB work looks at how best to communicate with vulnerable populations. One recent TRB publication is a transportation and emergency management toolkit: **“Communication with Vulnerable Populations: A Transportation and Emergency Management Toolkit.”** The toolkit provides a guiding framework and tools for constructing a scalable, adaptable communication process built on a network of agencies from public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Together, these partners will form interconnected communication channels with the ability to carry out the function of emergency communication not necessarily possible by working alone.
<http://www.trb.org/main/blurbs/166060.aspx>
- Other TRB reports are available via the monthly **Transportation Security: A Summary of Transportation Research Board Activities** slideshow that summarizes pre- and post-September 11, 2001, transportation security activities.
http://www.trb.org/SecurityEmergencies/Blurbs/Transportation_Security_A_Summary_of_Transportatio_163793.aspx

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), through its modal administrations, has produced the following publications that provide the necessary information to develop plans that address transportation concerns for vulnerable populations:

- The United We Ride website provides many resources on transportation planning, policy and coordination: <http://www.unitedweride.gov>. The United We Ride National Resource Center on Human Service Transportation Coordination also offers emergency preparedness resources: http://www.unitedweride.gov/1_10_ENG_HTML.htm.
- The USDOT Office of Civil Rights’ Emergency Preparedness section provides resources to assist those with disabilities: <http://www.dotcr.ost.dot.gov/asp/emergencyprep.asp>.
- FTA’s Office of Civil Rights addresses other aspects of preparedness including **“Transportation Equity in Emergencies”**: http://www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/civil_rights_6343.html.
- The Federal Highway Administration’s Office of Planning held a meeting in January 2008 entitled, MPO Peer Workshop on Addressing Security Planning and Natural & Manmade Disasters, available at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/metro/secumpo.htm>
- The Federal Highway Administration’s Office of Operations has produced a number of reports dealing with evacuations. These publications are available at <http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publications.htm#eto>