

United We Ride teams include multiple agencies from health, employment, transportation, and other related human service areas.

2.7 Assisting Special Needs Populations

- **How can I determine whether a portion of my clientele that need emergency preparedness or evacuation instructions translated into other languages or into accessible formats?**

Agencies can consult Census data to determine whether particular neighborhoods have concentrations of persons with limited English proficiency. Agencies can also consult with school systems and community organizations, local governments, religious organizations, and legal aid entities to collect additional information on the languages spoken, and language needs of area residents.

Agencies can consult with non-profit and community based organizations that serve persons who are blind or who have low-vision or who are hearing impaired to better understand what emergency preparedness and evacuation information should be translated into accessible formats, how to properly translate emergency information, and how to ensure that these population groups receive the appropriate information.

- **How can I best communicate emergency preparedness information and evacuation instructions to persons who do not have regular access to TV, radio, newspapers, or email?**

Agencies may consider partnering with local faith or cultural based, social service and other non-profit organizations that work with special needs populations and have credibility with the people they serve. Agencies can forward emergency preparedness information and evacuation instructions to these intermediary organizations who, in turn, can educate their constituents on what transportation will be available in the event of an emergency.

- **How can I identify individuals who require transportation assistance before an emergency situation arises?**

One way to identify individuals who require transportation assistance prior to an emergency situation is to work with health and human service providers in advance to obtain registries where individuals have voluntarily identified themselves as requiring transportation assistance. It may also be helpful to explore shared data use agreements with human service agencies to continue identifying those individuals who will require transportation. If human service providers do not maintain voluntary lists, you may suggest it to them.

- **How can I help individuals who require transportation assistance as an emergency situation occurs?**

During an emergency situation, FTA encourages transit agencies to work quickly to notify individuals who require transportation assistance of the time and place of pickup and to dispatch drivers in vehicles, including accessible options. You may also consider launching an emergency hotline regarding transportation evacuation information. In the course of providing notification, consideration should be given to provide translators for individuals with limited English proficiency and that sign language interpreters and TTY service is available for individuals who are deaf.

Assisting Special Needs Populations in Disaster Response

- 1. Use partnerships developed prior to the disaster to disseminate specific instructions to targeted groups.** Those intermediary organizations that partnered with transit agencies and MPOs prior to a disaster, to provide general emergency preparedness information, may be able to relay specific information developed by the transit agency and/or MPO on how to evacuate using the transit system.
- 2. Disseminate evacuation information using media targeted to special needs populations.** Transit agencies and MPOs can disseminate specific evacuation instructions through radio stations that are targeted to special needs populations.
- 3. Evacuate People with Disabilities.** People with disabilities and older adults who can travel to an evacuation pickup location can be transported along with non-disabled persons using the transit agency's fixed route service. In situations where people will need to wait for vehicles to transport them to shelters, transit agencies should give priority to older adults and persons with disabilities who have medical conditions that make it difficult to endure long waits. Persons with disabilities who use service animals should be allowed to travel with their service animal.

People with disabilities and older adults who are not able to travel to a pickup location should be evacuated using curb-to-curb or door-to-door paratransit service. This process can be expedited to the extent that individuals have pre-registered with the transit agency indicating that they would need a ride during an evacuation (and indicating whether they would need assistance traveling from their residence to the curb). Even if a voluntary registry has been established, paratransit providers should call through their membership rolls to verify that individuals would need to be picked up and transported to a shelter. Paratransit providers should attempt to accommodate riders' requested pickup times, but should schedule pickups at times and in a sequence that allows the system to safely evacuate all persons in advance of the onset of the disaster. Paratransit riders should be allowed to travel with a personal care attendant and/or service animal.

- 4. Use accessible vehicles to evacuate people after disaster strikes.** If it is possible for transit vehicles to access and evacuate people from an area that has been impacted by hurricane, earthquake, or other disaster, agencies should consider deploying their low-floor or other accessible vehicles to transport persons who have suffered temporary but non-life-threatening disabilities, such as sprains or fatigue.

Assisting Special Needs Populations in Disaster Recovery

Transit agencies and MPOs should plan to address the needs of minority and low-income persons, persons with limited English proficiency, and persons with disabilities in the course of providing transportation from shelters to neighborhoods once it is safe to return. Prior to a disaster, transit agencies and MPOs should use intermediary organizations and accessible dissemination methods to inform special needs populations of plans to provide return service. Specific information should be communicated in accessible formats and through media targeted to special needs populations.