



# DISASTER PREPAREDNESS: *People who use Oxygen*

## DEFINITION:

**Oxygen is used for a variety of medical needs. Individuals who use oxygen may need to use it continuously, for part of the day, or intermittently, depending on what it is prescribed for. Oxygen is commonly prescribed to people with breathing and heart conditions, and is also used for severe migraines.**

## LINKS WITH ADDITIONAL INFO:

Oxygen Users Disaster Evacuation Planning Guide

<http://www.nopersonleftbehind.org/Publications/OxygenDisasterEvacuationPlan.pdf>

NJ's Special Needs Registry for Disasters

[www.registerready.nj.gov](http://www.registerready.nj.gov)

Respiratory Care "Oxygen Supplies in Disaster Management" Respiratory Care January 1, 2013 vol. 58 no. 1 173-183

<http://rc.rcjournal.com/content/58/1/173.full.pdf+html>

## ABOUT NJGAINED:

The NJ Group for Access and Integration Needs in Emergencies and Disasters (NJ GAINED) acts as an advisory board to the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM) and the NJ Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (OHSP) regarding issues affecting people with access and functional needs (AFN) in New Jersey before, during and after an emergency or disaster. Read more at: <http://www.state.nj.us/njoem/plan/special-needs-njsnap.html>

## FOR OEM/FIRST RESPONDERS:

- **Update** local and regional vendor contacts for obtaining oxygen.
- **Conduct outreach** and provide disaster preparedness educational materials to people who use oxygen.
- **Interface with oxygen suppliers** and vendors regarding disaster preparedness and disaster business continuity planning.
- Ask oxygen suppliers and vendors about their plans to ensure **adequate supplies** of oxygen during disasters, and how they are working to prevent avoidable ambulance transports to hospitals for individuals who are running out of oxygen.
- People who use oxygen may have other complex functional needs; encourage them to register with **New Jersey's Register Ready**, complete a File of Life, etc.
- Plan for areas to **recharge durable medical equipment** in or near reception centers or shelters, or at other accessible community-based locations.



## FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS/COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS:

- Develop a **continuity of operations plan**; ensure staff are aware of agency expectations during emergencies and disasters.
- Contact consumers when **inclement weather** and adverse conditions are expected.
- Educate consumers on **disaster preparedness** and what to expect from oxygen vendors during adverse conditions.
- **Educate consumers** on having sufficient oxygen/cylinders/tubing/masks/backup batteries on hand.
- Educate consumers on **battery backups** — how long will it last? Do they need extra batteries? Can cylinders be used as a backup if the concentrator does not work?
- Ensure consumers can **hook up battery power** and utilize backup cylinders. Train them on this skill, and then have the consumer/caregiver physically demonstrate that they are capable of operating the equipment. (Practice makes perfect!)
- If a consumer is running out of oxygen and if emergent EMS can respond, recommend consumer call 9-1-1. Contact OEM if assistance is needed in obtaining oxygen after a disaster/emergency.



## FOR CONSUMERS AND FAMILIES/CAREGIVERS:

- **Ask** your oxygen supply company about its disaster plans and know what to expect.
- Keep extra cylinders/tubing/delivery devices/batteries for backup, and be familiar with using your **emergency backup system**.
- Know how long your batteries and supply of oxygen can last. **Consider obtaining a generator** to power a concentrator.
- **Be proactive:** If bad weather is forecasted, check your oxygen supply and call your vendor/supplier before the bad weather arrives.
- Learn about **disaster preparedness** for people with disabilities and chronic medical conditions at [www.ready.nj.gov](http://www.ready.nj.gov), and have a plan in case you need to evacuate.

