



# Emergency Preparedness among Oregonians with Disabilities

## Oregon Office on Disability and Health

In order to assess the status of emergency preparedness (EP) in the state of Oregon, an EP module was included in the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)<sup>1</sup> in the year 2013. The module was administered through both landline and cell phone surveys. The module defined an emergency or a large scale disaster as an event that has the potential to isolate or displace a person from his/her home for at least 3 days. Examples include natural disasters such as hurricanes or tornadoes as well as man-made disasters such as terrorist attacks. As these situations can pose a greater challenge to people with disabilities, planning and management for emergencies deserves special consideration.

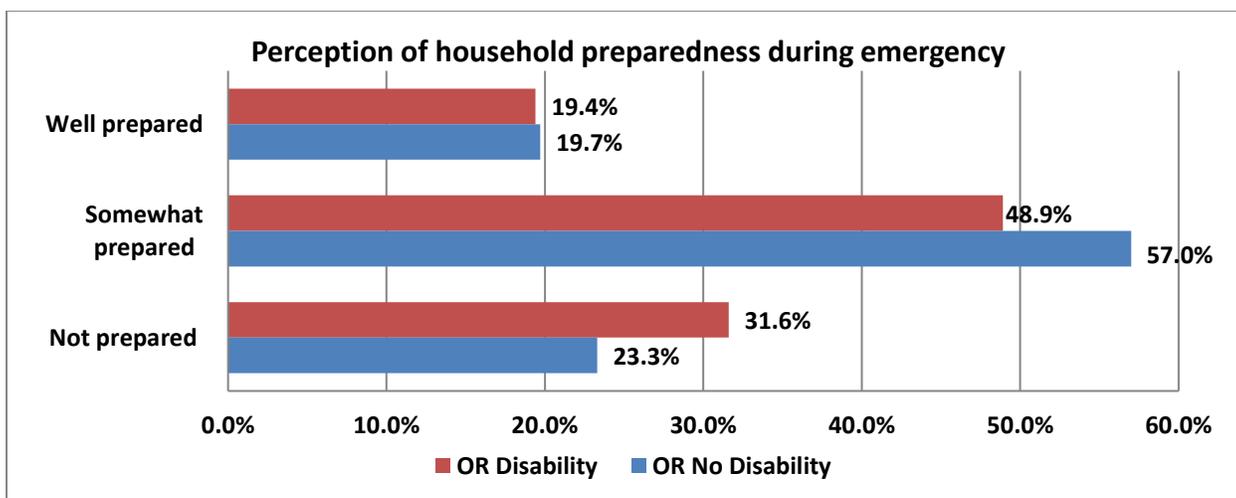
### Key Findings

In comparison to adults without disabilities, adults with disabilities were:

- Less likely to feel prepared to handle a large scale disaster or emergency
- More likely to have adequate water and medicines
- Less likely to have a flashlight and a battery operated radio with working batteries
- More likely to have a written evacuation plan, but less willing to evacuate
- More likely to obtain information through television, radio, and 'other' sources and less likely to get information from internet, print media and neighbors

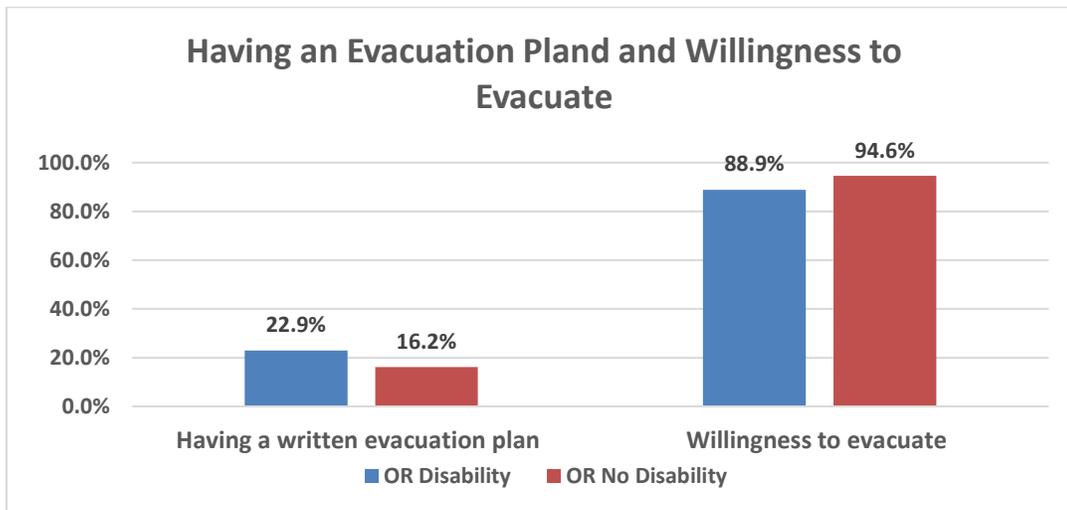
### Perceptions of preparedness

Among Oregonian adults with disabilities, 19.4% perceived themselves as being well prepared, almost 49% felt somewhat prepared, and 31.6% did not feel prepared at all to handle a large-scale disaster or emergency. Among adults without disabilities, 19.7% perceived themselves as being well prepared, 57% felt somewhat prepared, and 23.3% did not feel prepared at all to handle a large-scale disaster or emergency.



### Written disaster evacuation plan and willingness to evacuate

Among adults with disabilities in Oregon, almost 23% have a written disaster plan and almost 89% would be willing to evacuate in case of an emergency. Among adults without disabilities, 16.2% have a written plan present while 94.6% would be willing to evacuate during an emergency.



## Recommendations

In order to support people with disabilities (PWD) in emergency situations it is essential to:

- Train first responders and emergency planners about working with PWD ([Flip card tips](#))
- Provide EP information to PWD through clinicians
- Provide shelters that are accessible for PWD ([ADA Checklist for Emergency Shelters](#))
- Set up notification systems in communities so PWD can be notified of potential emergency situations
- Make local government EP and response programs accessible to PWD
- Encourage PWD to set up emergency kits and have proper supplies

## Conclusions

The information above reflects the status of emergency preparedness for the year 2013 in Oregon. Our findings highlight areas where people with disabilities felt well prepared for emergencies and areas where there are needs for improvement regarding EP. Importantly, adults with disabilities are less likely to have enough emergency supplies, a working flashlight and a radio with working batteries available, and nearly one third of people with disabilities are not prepared at all for an emergency. It should also be noted that a substantial proportion of people with disabilities rely on 'other' sources for obtaining and communicating information. Further investigation is needed to learn what these 'other' sources and modes of communication are so that information can be efficiently conveyed to people with disabilities in the event of a disaster.

For general Information on emergency preparedness for PWD please visit:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/features/emergencypreparedness/>
- <http://www.ready.gov/individuals-access-functional-needs>

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Questionnaire*. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013.