

# Be prepared to assist in an emergency

Assisting people with disabilities



**Approximately 4.4 million people living in Canada report having a disability.\* 14.3 per cent of the total population in Canada has either a visible or non-visible disability.**

**Approximately 171,030 people living in Peel report having a disability.\* 14.8 per cent of the total population in Peel has either a visible or non-visible disability.**

**In a large-scale emergency, such as a tornado, flood or blackout, people with disabilities may require additional assistance.**

**Read on to learn more about proper assistive procedures and communication techniques to help ensure that you know how to assist in any emergency situation.**

# In an emergency:

- ❑ **Ask the person if they need your assistance.**
- ❑ **Be calm, receptive and listen carefully as to how you can best assist the person.**
- ❑ **Obtain permission to touch the person, their service animal, equipment and/or assistive devices.**
- ❑ **Follow instructions posted on equipment and/or assistive devices.**
- ❑ **Make a list and communicate all actions taken, including the location of the person's service animal and/or assistive devices to the next care provider.**

# Do not:

- ✗ **Rush, create obstacles or distract service animals.**
- ✗ **Let the person be separated from their equipment and/or assistive devices, unless necessary.**
- ✗ **Attempt to lift or assist in moving someone or their equipment and/or assistive devices unless you are familiar with the procedure and have obtained permission.**
- ✗ **Give food or liquids to an unconscious or unresponsive person.**

# Communication is key

**Mobility disability** refers to reduced function of limbs such as legs and feet. It can range from having difficulty moving to the use of assistive devices such as wheelchairs or canes.

## When assisting someone with a mobility disability:

- ❑ **Speak at eye level; sit down to communicate, if needed.**
- ❑ **Ask if they require assistance; some people may only need assistance getting out of their assistive devices.**
- ❑ **Be sure that you have understood the individual and that the individual has understood you, by repeating what they have said.**
- ❑ **Inform the individual regarding the location of their assistive devices.**

**Sensory disability** refers to individuals experiencing varying levels of **vision** and/or **hearing disability**.

**When assisting someone with a vision disability:**

- ❑ Touch their shoulder to let them know that you are there to help.
- ❑ Be descriptive when giving directions.
- ❑ Speak slowly and carefully.
- ❑ Advise the person of any obstacles.  
e.g. “There’s water on the floor to your left.”

## **When assisting someone with hearing disability:**

- ❑ Trace letters with your finger on the palm of the hand of the person to facilitate communication.**
- ❑ Face the person when speaking since they may rely on lip reading.**
- ❑ Communicate in close proximity.**

**Cognitive/non-visible disabilities** refers to people who may have difficulty reading or who process information differently.

### **When assisting someone with a cognitive/non-visible disability:**

- ❑ Use simple phrases when providing information about the emergency, including areas affected and what steps need to be taken.
- ❑ Speak carefully and slowly using a normal tone of voice.
- ❑ Communicate with pictures such as universal symbols, if necessary.
- ❑ Try to decrease noise and other distractions that may impair the person's understanding.
- ❑ If the person asks you to repeat something, do so.



# Notes

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be ready. be **prê**pared.

For more information on emergency preparedness, visit  
[www.peelregion.ca/pep](http://www.peelregion.ca/pep)

For more information on accessibility planning, visit  
[www.peelregion.ca/accessibility](http://www.peelregion.ca/accessibility)

 **Region of Peel**  
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