

LET'S OVERCOME DISABILITIES
TOGETHER AGAINST DISASTERS
AFETLERE KARŞI ENGELLERİ
BİRLİKTE AŞALIM



FIRE PREPAREDNESS FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED





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INTRODUCTION

The number of disasters occurring in the world and in our country has significantly increased recently and these disasters have brought about social, cultural and economic losses. The most effective way to protect yourself from disasters is being prepared against them and turning it into a lifestyle. For a safe life, Be Informed, Make a Plan, Be Prepared and Take Action!

Although disasters are impossible to prevent, minimizing their damage is possible only with a society that is informed, educated and organized. Aiming for each individual to be prepared against disasters and emergencies, this study presents the disadvantaged groups' proper actions within their own means and capabilities.

You can prepare yourself and your loved ones against disasters and emergencies better by evaluating your own personal needs and by preparing an emergency plan that fits these needs.

Do not forget that no one knows your needs, preferences and skills better than you. YOU ARE the expert of YOURSELF!

BEFORE A FIRE

- ◆ There are some simple measures that you can take for fire safety precautions. These are;
 - Using fireproof materials of construction or materials which are difficult to burn,
 - Using smoke and gas detectors,
 - Having an active fire extinguisher which you can easily reach,
 - Not plugging many electrical appliances into a single socket,
 - Checking electricity and natural gas installations frequently,
 - Setting up an emergency alarm and lighting system,
 - Separating igniting and combustible material sources.
- ◆ Depending on your disability, by making an evaluation with your family, relatives or support person, and if necessary, by getting help from them;



- Secure your home or office, corridors, stairwells, doors, windows and other areas in such a way that you can easily leave the building in an emergency. Fix or remove furniture that may block your way out.
- ◆ **Create a Disaster Plan and Personal Support Network;**
 - Create a Disaster Plan with the people in your support network and decide on how to communicate and to evacuate during emergencies.



Image 1: Fixing items

- Create an escape/evacuation plan. Open and safe areas (parks, fields, school yards and safe empty areas) to meet family members after a fire should be determined with their alternatives. The chosen meeting point should be close to the places frequently visited like home, school and workplace. In case of being somewhere else other than these places during a fire, where and how to meet the family members should also be determined.
- One of the first steps of disaster preparedness for the disabled individuals is to decide on the people they can trust for support. A personal support network includes people who can contact you, check if you are well and help you when you are in need during emergencies.
- A Personal Support Network consists of at least three people such as your family, neighbours and colleagues, those who are in walking distance from you.



- Create your Personal Support Network at home, at work and in the places where you spend most of your time.

- People in your support network need to know how to enter your home to check you in case of danger and how to reach you when they cannot hear from you.

In this way, people in your personal support network and rescue teams can easily reach you for evacuation

- Make sure the people in your personal support network are aware of your plan. Inform them about your support devices and the necessary documents.

- When there is no accessible exit and you need to evacuate the building you are in, determine the most appropriate way of evacuation with alternatives and practise with the people in your support network.

- Especially if you are staying in a multi-storey apartment, a building complex or a large workplace, provide the staff and administrators with a list about your disability, your special needs, your building and living space. This is important for active intervention by officers in the case of a possible disaster or emergency.





- ◆ Perform **drills** based on different scenarios.
 - In these drills, consider situations such as the presence and absence of the people on your support network during a fire. Drills should include both what to do during the fire and evacuation after the fire, and they should be practised in all places (home, school, workplace) where you are frequently present.
 - Problems and difficulties encountered during the drills will allow you to revise your plan and develop appropriate action patterns.
 - In order to prepare for evacuation drills, first an exit plan must be made. While making this plan, the possibilities of being alone and being with the people in the support network during the fire should be considered. The plan should be applied with the people in the support network, and the exit routes should be determined with their alternatives by evaluating the features of the place where you are during the fire.

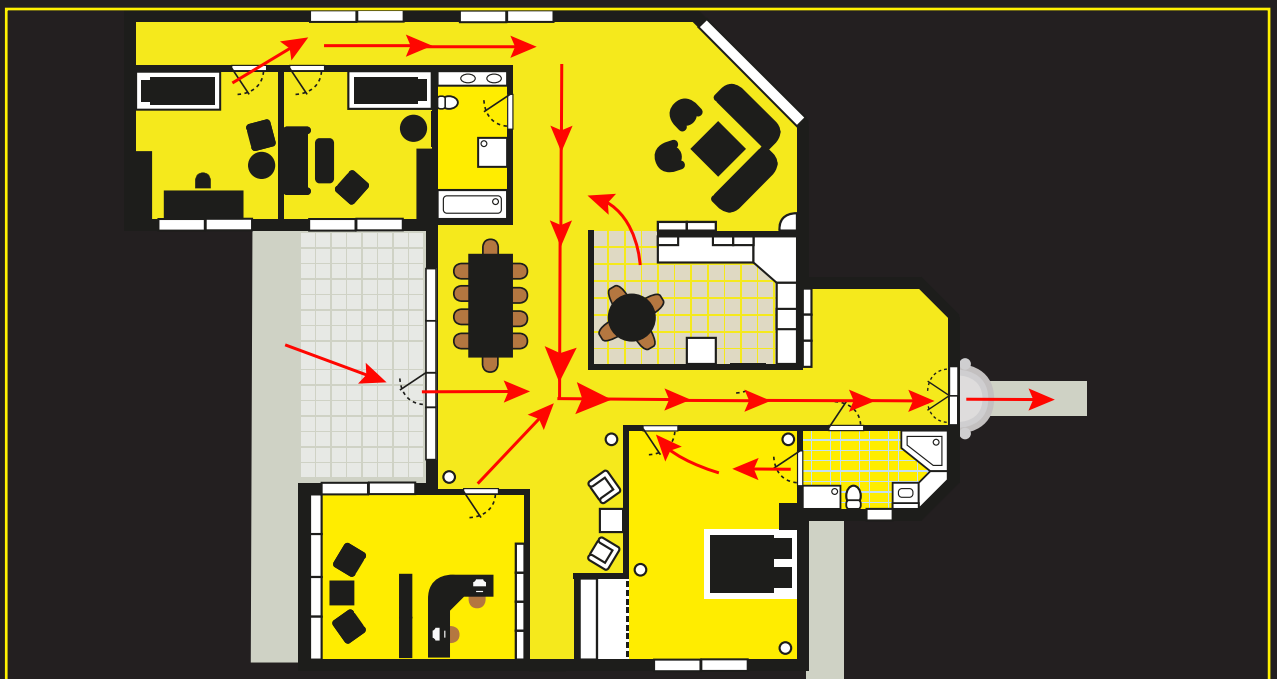


Image 3: Evacuation/exit plan

- Fire safety corridors constructed in buildings such as apartments, workplaces, shopping centers and sites are safe areas to prevent smoke from spreading to escape ladders and exit area, and for the injured and the disabled to wait. Practise going to the fire safety hall of the places in your location.



- Keep your contact lenses, glasses, assistive devices or your cane near you or your bed.
- ◆ Have a fire extinguisher in a place that is easily accessible for fire hazards in your living area, and get support from your local fire brigade and AFAD officers on their use when necessary.
 - The fire extinguisher must be easily accessible.
 - Learn to take position against fires and intervene in fire with a fire extinguisher to the extent your condition allows you. Both you and your companion must be informed about fire extinguishers.
 - Evaluate the size of the fire depending on your eyesight and intervene as much as you can if it is an initial fire.
 - If you cannot use the fire extinguisher, make sure that people in your personal support network learn to use it.
- ◆ Make sure that the procedures for construction, use or modification of buildings are based on the “Regulation on the Protection of Buildings from Fire”.
- ◆ If you are partially sighted or if you can detect the light, place safety lights that automatically switch on to the rooms and corridors to illuminate the evacuation route in the event of a power failure.
- ◆ Have warning and alarm systems installed in your home and workplace. Test your warning systems at certain periods.
- ◆ Have smoke alarms that have different warning sounds and different sound tones and sensitive to smoke in separate sections of your home and workplace, with.
 - This will help us to understand where there is a fire. For example, the alarm level and the warning sound of the device that detects the smoke resulting from a fire in the bedroom and the device that detects a fire in the kitchen must be different from each other.
- ◆ Make sure that the exit and evacuation doors open outwards.



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◆ Prepare a Disaster and Emergency Kit;

- Disasters and emergencies can happen anytime anywhere, and you may not find any opportunity to search for or get the supplies you need. Prepare a disaster and emergency kit containing special needs and essential life support materials depending on your disability and keep your kit in easy-to-access locations for you.

- **Recommended content:** Medical supplies, water, dry food, prescription samples, hygiene materials, emergency contact information, a copy of important documents and contact details of people on your support network, blankets, current photos of family members, a magnifying glass, batteries, a radio, a whistle, gloves to clean the ruins, first aid kit, a copy of ID, a dust mask and glasses, a spare key for your home, baby food, diapers, a feeding bottle, a pacifier etc..

- Special needs: Eyeglasses, a foldable cane, prostheses being used, a talking clock, a strong and wide beamed flashlight for those with low vision, lens and solution if you use it.

These materials are the recommended content. You can create your kit according to your special needs

- Check all items in the disaster and emergency kit periodically and renew if necessary (Renewing water, food and batteries regarding their expiration dates and changing the clothes appropriate to the season).

- Keep copies of important documents and belongings that water might damage in waterproof bags).

- When preparing the disaster and emergency kit, make sure that it is at an appropriate weight and is easy to carry for everyone, especially regarding the disabled individual's condition.



- If the devices and equipment used are of such a size that they cannot be put into a bag, be careful to keep them in a safe place and always make sure they stand side by side with the bag.
- Keep your disaster and emergency kit ready for easy access.
- Mark the items in your disaster bag using coloured tape, embossed print or braille alphabet.



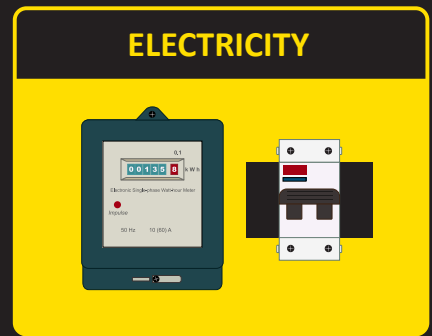
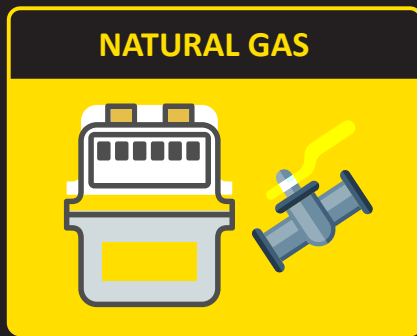
Image 4: Disaster and Emergency Kit

◆ Prepare a **Personal Evaluation List**;

- Prepare a personal evaluation list that shows the personal skills you can and cannot perform in your daily life and keep your list in your disaster and emergency kit. In this way, after a disaster or emergency, the staff can understand better your needs depending on your disability and intervene more effectively.



- ◆ Identify accessible places in a hotel or asylum centre in your immediate vicinity or outside your area for a possible temporary accommodation after a disaster.
- ◆ Find out where your gas, water and electricity sources are located in your home and learn how to turn them off. Have the installations made accessible.
 - Identify gas, water, and electric shutoff valves with bright coloured tape, large printed labels, or Braille text.



- ◆ Place your glasses or visual aid devices in a container that is fastened to your bedside. This will make it easier to have quick access to the devices when awakened with panic.
- ◆ **The guide/ assistant animals and dogs** are not only a companion in daily life, but also companions in an emergency. The guide/ assistant animals can help to safely escape from the danger and to guide the visually impaired individual during evacuation. If you have a guide/ assistant animal;
 - Prepare your disaster and emergency kit according to the care needs of your animal and do not forget to make preparations for them as well.
 - The following list has the basic items that you must have in your kit to meet the needs of your guide/ assistant animal or pet in an emergency. Be sure that your disaster and emergency kit is accessible and easy to move, since disaster evacuation may be necessary.



Emergency kit contents for animals: Sufficient bottled water, animal food, spoon, a collar and leash, a harness, blankets and toys, plastic bags, paper towels, bags, sterile gloves, a copy of the report card (ownership information, identity information, veterinary medicines), manual tin-opener, medications the animal uses, vitamins, newspapers, a muzzle, masks (against dust and smoke), food and water can, etc.

- These materials are the recommended content. You can make a kit according to your animal's specific needs.
- Do not forget to check and renew the items that need changing every 6 months.



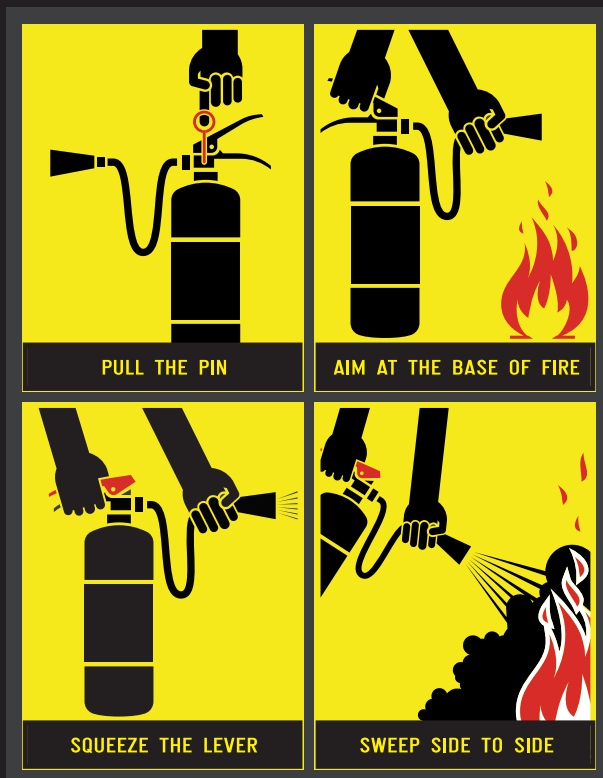
Image 5: Emergency kit contents for animals.

- ◆ Remember that pets and guide animals may be confused, scared, or injured during or after a fire. Keep a cage or carrier in an accessible place to transport and evacuate your animals. Do not leave them behind.



DURING A FIRE

- ◆ If you are exposed to any fire risk;
 - If you feel a flame or smoke, if you get the smell of burns, run the alarm immediately within the bounds of possibility by making an alert saying, “There is a fire!” and call the “110 Fire Brigade” immediately.
 - In a widespread fire, leave your place as soon as possible and do not try to put out the fire. However, you can intervene in small fires at their initial phase if your vision allows you and if you have taken extinguishing trainings. Never take a risk that will put your life in danger.
 - Use the **PASS** method when using fire extinguishers to intervene in initial fires:



Pull the pin,



Aim at the fire source,



Spray,



Sweep.

Image 6: How to use a fire extinguisher

- ◆ If you or people in your support network have to intervene in the initial fire, make sure that the extinguishers which are effective from 3-6 metres are sprayed by pointing to the possible burning zone. A fire extinguisher used in a closed environment will slow down the burning and reduce the flame temperature. It will save enough time to leave the place.



- ◆ As mentioned before, the fire should be intervened at the initial phase (i.e. within a minute). After that, the person should shout out “There is a fire” and report the fire within the possibilities (alarm warning systems etc.) and escape to a safe place.
- ◆ The most risky areas where a fire is likely to occur in the houses are kitchens (stove and pan fires, ovens and water heaters which are left on, etc.).
- ◆ If a pan on the stove catches a fire in the kitchen, do not panic and do the following respectively:
 - Switch off the stove,
 - Soak your towel under the tap,
 - Close on the burning pan,
 - Do not move the pan,
 - Never spill water on it.
- ◆ Do not intervene electric fires with water as well.
- ◆ Provide your safety with the evacuation plan you have already prepared and practised. Make sure that evacuation routes are accessible.
- ◆ Try to find alternative routes if the smoke comes from the exit direction or under the door.
 - If the smoke or burning smell comes from another room, test the temperature before opening the doors. Touch the doors with the back of your hand. Do not open the doors that give you a very warm feeling when you touch and if you smell smoke coming from underneath. Opening the door will cause the fire to grow. If the temperature is normal, open the door slowly, and if there is still smoke, try to move by crawling on the ground.
 - During the fire, heavy smoke and poisonous gases accumulate in the ceiling, so crouch down and move to a safe location.
- ◆ Never move away from the wall when you are indoors. Remember that if you move away from the wall in a place with intense smoke, your risk of getting lost is higher. Memorize the location of the exit doors and the



items on the exit/evacuation way that you specified on your Disaster Plan. Continue without leaving the wall, and it will direct you to the exit door.

- ◆ If the fire is in the direction of escape, evaluate the size of the heat inside by not opening the door completely but opening it slightly. If it is not life threatening, open the door slightly and move to the nearest exit by leaning on the wall and crouching down.
- ◆ If you cannot get out of the room, stay in a position beside a window where you can be seen from outside and ask for help. Do not take shelter in places such as cupboards or tables.
- ◆ If you have a chance, cover door openings and ventilation holes with a damp cloth to prevent outside smoke from entering.
- ◆ In a place with dense smoke, breathe by covering your mouth and nose with a piece of wet wipe or cloth, if possible.
- ◆ If your clothes are ignited, do not try to run, **STOP** where you are, **DROP** yourself to the floor and **ROLL** on the floor to extinguish the flames, protect your face with your hands.
- ◆ In an emergency, you can use the call button to alert people in your support network at home or at work.



DON'T FORGET

**SMOKE IS MORE FATAL THAN FIRE.
GO TO A SAFE EXIT BY CRAWLING.**

IF YOUR CLOTHES CATCH FIRE; STOP, LIE DOWN, ROLL!



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AFTER A FIRE

- ◆ Go to the emergency assembly/meeting areas already set in your Disaster Plan and wait there.



- ◆ Carry out a condition evaluation.
 - Try to be calm. Evaluate the way you are affected by the fire, your health condition, and the situation around you.
- ◆ If you have intervened in an initial fire, cool down the area by pouring water to prevent the fire from resurfacing. Open the windows and clean the smoke inside.