

## Emergency Preparedness

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**Presenter: Chris Littlewood**

**Chris Littlewood:** Good morning! I work for St. Petersburg College and the Center for Public Safety Innovation. I'll explain a little bit more about that in just a few minutes. One thing I wanted to share first with everybody is being called the "subject matter expert" can be problematic but I like it because people come to me and ask questions. They ask for help and I'm really very passionate about the subject. If I'm not working doing it, I'm doing it on my own time like giving talks, what I'm doing here. The problem comes up when people expect you to know everything. However, if I don't know the answer to your question or if I give you the wrong answer, I will find out the right answer for you.

I work with FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and I work with the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) as a special government employee. Basically, that means I'm under the same guidelines as a government employee, but they don't pay me. My main employer is St. Pete College and our target audience is first responders. My job is to make sure that first responders consider how to protect people with disabilities.

Before I get started, I want you to turn to the person on your left or right or somewhere around you and quickly ask or discuss two questions. First question is, if you go home tomorrow and a disaster happens the first day you got home, what is your biggest concern as a person who is deaf/hard of hearing or deaf-blind? In the state of Florida, we always consider deaf-blind people together with deaf/hard of hearing people because deaf-blind people have a lot of the same communication issues that we do. I'm on the state of Florida's Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. We have a representative who is deaf-blind. Therefore, everything that I am trained for and have to do, I make sure it includes people who are deaf-blind, as well. That's the first question to discuss, what is your biggest concern in a disaster?

The second question, more importantly, is, what can you do about it? So take a minute and turn to the person next to you and discuss that a little bit and we'll next talk about that. (Small group discussions)

Okay. Let's talk about question number one.

**Audience Member:** We discussed that our number-one problem would be how would we know? My community has a loud siren for the hearing people. But if you're deaf, how do you know what's going on? If you have a hearing loss, you have to register and let the county know and they say they will call you. In a disaster, you know how technology is! Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. I mean how in the world are you really going to find out if the phones are down? That's our number-one concern. I attended a meeting to be on a team of volunteers at a local center in case of a disaster. But still, it's a major concern in a disaster because there's no guarantee that we'll be notified.

**Chris Littlewood:** Very good. The biggest concern for people who are deaf and hard of hearing or if you care about someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, getting the information that you need the same as your hearing counterpart. That is very important. What you can do about it is get involved.

Why are we stressing emergency preparedness? Number one, disasters are occurring more frequently and with stronger effects. We've had some big tornadoes like what happened in Joplin, Missouri. Of course everybody remembers hurricane Katrina and Super Storm Sandy. Those have been a couple of the biggest, major hurricane storms that we've had in the last 10-15 years. It used to be that we only had to worry about a storm like those hitting the country every 25 or 50 years. Past storms haven't had as big an impact as Katrina or Sandy have had today. One of the reasons for that is there are more people in harm's way. More people live on the coast or close to the coast. I live in the state of Florida and we think about hurricanes all the time. If you live in Arizona, Illinois or Pennsylvania maybe you don't think about hurricanes so much. We'll talk about other disasters, too. I'm not here just to talk about hurricanes. Everybody needs to think about the disasters that can affect them and what you can do to protect yourself.

Preparedness is everybody's responsibility. What can you do? Get involved. Tell the emergency rescue people what your communication requirements are. If you're going to sit around and wait for your local fire department, your county emergency management or state emergency management to solve all your problems and do everything they can to assist you, you're in trouble. Government has a responsibility to do something, but one thing I want to tell you is by the nature and definition of a disaster, resources will be overwhelmed. You need to be prepared to look after yourself and look after your community. FEMA talks about the whole community approach, which means everybody gets

involved, not just people who work in emergency management and emergency planning. In a disaster with resources overwhelmed, the government has a limited ability to assist people. The government's number-one responsibility is to save lives. There are lower priorities for other things.

I want everybody to be thinking constantly about where people who are deaf or hard of hearing should be involved in preparedness. I'll talk about CERT, (Community Emergency Response Team) and other organizations related to volunteers or actions on the preparedness end. As a public safety trainer, everything I talk about is about getting involved on the preparedness end. I love cartoons. Has everybody seen the Disney cartoon called "The Incredibles?" The lady on that cartoon says, "Luck Favors the Prepared." You'll be lucky if you're prepared. Do everything you can on the front end. Hope for the best. But plan for the worst.

Self-advocacy is crucial. Get involved with your own survival. Tell law enforcement or the fire department or emergency management what you can do and what they can do to communicate better with you.

We need to think about the type of disasters that can affect you. If you live in Utah, you're not too concerned about hurricanes. Think about the simple home emergencies like fires. I've had people somebody ask me last night about the best fire alarm for somebody who's deaf or hard of hearing. I can't actually recommend one to you until I know *your* deaf or hard of hearing fingerprint. Something that works great for somebody, for example, a low frequency beep or flashing light, may not help somebody that's really a sound sleeper and doesn't hear a low frequency.

A lot of different resources exist that you can go to but I would suggest you contact your local fire department and your local American Red Cross. In my area, they deploy people on a Saturday to set up fire alarms. If you email me, I'll try to put somebody in touch with you in your local area. If that person knows in advance to bring a fire alarm for deaf or hard of hearing, he is prepared.

Types of disaster. I have already talked about hurricanes, tornadoes and floods. Those can be natural. A flood could be a natural or a manmade disaster depending on what we've done as far as the footprint that we made in changing cities. Technological disaster is a lot of times a cyber security issue. What if the Internet went down for a long period of time? Nobody could get their money out of the bank? How many people bank online? That's becoming a bigger and

bigger problem. Even more importantly and it happened here in Arizona, cyber security created another risk. Some vandals had cut some lines in the northern part of Arizona and the 911 went down. That created a huge problem. Intentional disasters such as terrorism, losing 9/11 and the Oklahoma City bombing are generally unexpected. With hurricanes, we have some warning. With a tornado watch or tornado warning, we have a little bit of warning. Floods? Maybe. From acts of terrorism and breaks in cyber security, you may have no warning. One minute everything may be fine and the next minute you may have no communication and potentially a huge problem.

In a disaster, emergency personnel cannot help everybody at the same time. If you live in a city of 50,000 people, servicing everybody will be a big problem. Where it says, "lives, health, and the environment are endangered," don't forget that *lives* are the priority. If you have a problem because a tree knocked down fence or is blocking your road and nobody can get out, that's a problem. But you can wait if somebody else had a tree fall on *them*.

You want to consider your local hazard vulnerability. You have to consider the risks if you live in a rural area, a big city, if you live on the coast, if you live on a river. You want to consider the most common disasters that can happen to you and you want to consider the reason or historical impacts. So like I said, in Florida we have a big impact from hurricanes. We have changed Labor Day weekend to "Hurricane Weekend." It seems like we always have to worry about a hurricane on Labor Day weekend. You want to consider what you're going to do if you have a disruption of service. Remember what I said about cyber security? If the Internet goes down, what are you going to do? If you depend on the Internet for videophones or for captioned telephones, how are we going to communicate with somebody outside your home if you don't have the Internet? Have you thought about all those things? Also, you want to see how your home can be of a danger to you. If you have bookshelves where objects could fall on you, or where gas lines could break, things like that could be a problem. You need to think about places where you are close to flood or fire hazards in your own home.

I'm a certified trainer for CERT. There are a few deaf or hard of hearing CERT people in the country. What I like to hear is when people who are deaf and hard of hearing get involved in CERT. A mix of both deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing people and other people with disabilities would be an optimum response team. We had a local guy with a mobility disability. He only had one leg but he said, "I want to help. I want to do everything that I can." Not only did everybody know

how to contact him so he wasn't in harm's way with his mobility disability, he knew how to connect a whole lot of people in the community who had similar disabilities. That was very important.

Home and workplace preparedness. It's important to mention being prepared at home, yes. But how many people in here work away from home? Do you have any type of emergency preparedness kit at their office or in their car? Have a Go Bag. It should go with you everywhere. Know the local hazards, alerts, and warning systems. Both the iPhone and the Android phones have a way to be set up so you receive local emergency alerts if you live in a large metropolitan area. I actually heard the alert. It was so loud on my smartphone. And I'm pretty close to deaf myself. I was on my way home and all of a sudden my smart phone, sitting on my center console in my truck, just started making all these weird, loud noises that I'd never heard before. It was a hurricane warning for my area. I had the emergency alert set for my county. But again, you want to look at your local hazards and alerts, warning systems and evacuation routes. It's important you know the evacuation route you're going to take and practice it. Also have a back-up way. For example, in my area everybody wants to drive I-75 North to get away from hurricanes. If everybody decides to get away from hurricanes and takes I-75 North, what's going to happen? Bottleneck. You're stuck. So if you have another way to go, you might be able to get around the traffic jam. In addition to being familiar with the other ways that you can evacuate from your area, have a shelter plan.

The crucial thing I want to stress about shelters is the difference between sheltering in a public shelter and sheltering with family or friends in a safe area outside of the evacuation zone. This is the difference between a lifeboat and a cruise ship. If you go to a public shelter, you're in the lifeboat. You might get a 6 by 10 area, a cot and three packages of food. If you're with friends or family, you might have a very comfortable bed, all sorts of information, your favorite food and people, all the things that you need. Whoever has been to a public shelter knows they are hot and have too many people. A lot of times they smell after a while. So think about how you're going to deal with the crowds and how communication is going to work for you.

Sheltering in place could be another option. That's where you're making a plan to shelter at home where you are. You could also plan to shelter at work if that's where you might be when a disaster hits. You may not have time to evacuate. If it's a chemical problem or something like that, there may be emergency alerts to let you know that it's not even safe to go outside. Nevertheless, moving to outside the evacuation zone and being with family or friends is much better.

You want to do everything you can for preparedness by having a kit and having a plan. You want to discuss your plans with your family and friends, talk about what you could do to practice.

The fire alarm is a familiar emergency alert, but it can turn into a disaster for a family. Practice with your family what to do when the fire alarm goes off. One of the things I do when I'm changing the batteries is I deliberately set the alarm off. Then I can watch my 8 and 10 year olds run to the front door so I know they know what to do. I want to make sure that they're familiar with the plan. They also know different locations where to meet. We have the tree in our front yard, we have the neighbor across the street or the school around the corner. My kids know to go to these three places if there's an emergency. Even if you don't have children, you should discuss your emergency plan with your family. Also check in with your neighbors and friends, too. By the way, the best person to know in your neighborhood is the guy with the chain saw and a generator if you don't have one yourself. If you have a problem when a tree goes down or you lose power or something like that, that generator or saw will become very important.

You also want to talk about specific communication needs for yourself. Maybe some of your neighbors and friends are deaf or hard of hearing. Know what they may need and do what you can to get them assistance before the emergency occurs.

Disaster planning. Bigger and more important than having a kit and having three-four gallons of water per person per day, including pets, is *talking* about your plan. What are you going to do? If you can't afford to have a big kit that includes food, water and everything on hand, at least know where what's needed is. You've got this stuff over here, that stuff over here in my home and if you need to, you can bring it all together. Just talk about where it is. You should also have an out-of-state contact. You should have one person maybe out of your own state who knows how to get in touch with everybody related to you, your family and friends when there's a problem so they know you're okay.

Transportation is very important to consider before a disaster happens. When you talk about people with access and functional needs, transportation is crucial. Does somebody using a wheelchair require special transportation? Does somebody not have a car and only uses public transportation? Devise a plan and as with sheltering, practice your plan.

You always want to consider the needs of children and people with disabilities. I mention people with disabilities because disaster not only hits people who are deaf or hard of hearing. There might be other people with disabilities you can

help. I always stress in Florida that people who are deaf or hard of hearing have other disabilities. Being late deaf is not my only disability. You need to be aware of the things that people may need so that they have the access and functional needs aids and the same communication that everybody requires in an emergency or in a disaster.

Mitigation. What I think about when I think about mitigation is my garage door. Twenty-five years ago my garage door used to have a steel or metal bar about every 15 feet. Now my garage door has one every 4 feet because when I wanted to replace it, law required these extra bars for protection against storms. Mitigation can be the extra staples in the trusses of your roof to protect you or fire retardant wood if you live in area related to wildfires. Mitigation is whatever you can do to reduce the loss of life or reduce the effects of disasters.

Everyone should have adequate homeowner's or renter's insurance if at all possible. I love this last little piece and it's not my wording. It says, "Add flood insurance if you are in a flood zone or in a flood hazard area." Raise your hand if you're in a flood hazard area. Everybody's hand should go up because everywhere can flood. I live in Florida halfway down the west coast at the highest point in Pinellas County. People can't believe it when I say my elevation is this high: 55 feet above sea level. I do not live in a "flood zone." BUT, I have flood insurance. If a hurricane or a flood happens, I don't want my homeowner's insurance saying, "this isn't covered, it's a flood." I can let my homeowner's insurance and flood insurance fight it out and decide who is going to write me a check.

The other thing to remember is a lot of times a homeowner's insurance policy will give you a discount if you carry flood insurance. Currently I have my flood policy with my homeowner's policy. The cost if you do not live in a flood zone is minimal. Between the reduced rate that I pay because I don't live in a flood zone and because I have flood insurance with my homeowner's insurance, I think it's like an extra \$100 bucks a year. For that peace of mind, it's worth the extra \$100 bucks.

Personal protective equipment is especially important if you're going to volunteer or be involved with a community emergency response team CERT. You will need a disaster kit, which you can buy on the Internet. More to the point, if you are involved with a local CERT team, they will give you the kit. If you are involved with a CERT team that is supported by FEMA, and you say you need CART or you need an interpreter for the training for CERT, they will provide it.

Sometimes the very important things to do in an emergency or disaster can be passing out water. It can be traffic control. Or if a big tree falls down across a major interstate, CERT teams can be involved not only in search and rescue but in assisting the entire community. You can get training in search and rescue, basic first aid, CPR, all the things you need to do related to preparedness. To find out where the nearest CERT team is in your area, go to the CERT website or just Google CERT, it comes up. You can search by zip code and contact them if you want to become involved.

I already talked about the Go Bag. If I go, my bag goes with me. It has my medications in it. I require certain medications. More important than medications though is having the *list* of the medications that you're required to take. Clearly, if you run out of those medications, it doesn't help to be telling people, "Well, I take a blue pill once every other day." The other thing to remember related to medication is that your insurance company is not going to allow you to have an extra two-week supply in advance. You may be able to get a couple of days extra supply, little extra, but that's it. A Go Bag is what you can take in a moment's notice. Maybe keep important paperwork for your home in it. I keep a copy of my home declaration page for my insurance. I keep copies of my own passport and my family's passports and banking information. Things like that I have in there. Generally, I also have my laptop with me, which has a lot of information if I have power or batteries.

If you're deaf or hard of hearing, what's important? If you use hearing aids or have cochlear implants, having extra batteries is very important to have them in your Go Bag. Also have your accommodation card. I have one on the visor of my car and one in my wallet if I'm rendered unconscious. An accommodation card basically says what you need for accommodations if you're deaf or hard of hearing. If I'm unconscious and I wake up in a hospital it says who to contact and it says what my communication needs are. It says that I need CART if possible and I know some sign language. The card lists people to contact who can explain my communication needs. I believe NAD has accommodation cards one on their website. Your local fire or police departments and sheriff's offices may have a website where you can print out a placard for your car visor. I don't recommend having stickers that say that the driver is deaf or hard of hearing because that might make you a target for somebody who doesn't necessarily have the best intentions. But an accommodation card is very important.

You need to think about what your role is and what your responsibilities are as a family member. It is an entire community's responsibility to be prepared for a

disaster. All community members should take steps to prepare. At the annual community preparedness day in national preparedness month, I talked to somebody at FEMA who told me that people with disabilities are either way too prepared or they've thought nothing about preparedness at all. It's better to find a comfortable middle ground. Have a discussion about preparedness in your family. It doesn't cost any money to talk about what you're going to do if a disaster hits you. If you live in a possible flood area, if you live in an area where you could face a tornado, an earthquake or a wildfire, ask what is your biggest risk? Preparedness is most effective when it engages the entire community. Government cannot do it alone.

We're going to talk about communication roles of government for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. If citizens don't know what the communication needs are in their community, it is everybody's responsibility in this room to tell them. Tell them what *your* communication needs are. When you talk about preparedness, think about the things that other people can do, as well. Children and people with disabilities like to be involved. My kids' school has information related to preparedness and the children get their families involved. They want to do it. We have in the state of Florida, a national program, called "the Teaching." I go to my kid's class and I talk about the same kind of stuff I talk about here. All the kids of course want the little flashlight I bring that they can take home. Having the flashlight helps them talk about the most important thing that they can do to help themselves and their family if bad things happen. Children have a limited understanding of what "bad things happening" might be but they can understand if there's a problem and Mom or Dad is not around. They know to go to the neighbor across the street whom they know and trust.

Next I am going to talk a little bit about people who are deaf or hard of hearing and the Report on Special Needs Assessment for Katrina Evacuees. That report wrote that the most underserved group in a disaster were the people who were deaf or hard of hearing. That was about Katrina in 2005. So now many years later is that still happening? Have there been great improvements? Yes, absolutely. There have been a lot of things that have happened with FEMA and at the local level and everywhere in between to make sure that people get the communication access that they need. But related to communication, remember: "The single big biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." I love that quote from George Bernard Shaw. An example: A lot of times my hearing wife will say to me, "Well I told you this." And I will ask, "Did you sign it?" She'll say, "Well no." But then she'll throw that back at me where I'll say something to her and I'll say, "Well, I told you." She'll then ask if I had signed it. I live in a family where everybody is hearing and in a lot of cases, it's real easy if

nobody is looking at you to drop the signing. That happens way too much with us. So, it's very important to make sure that communication is not only sent but received.

Captions, interpreters, sign language, picture cues, pen and paper, all the things that we talk about here at the ALDA convention, are whatever works in an emergency or a disaster. When we talk about the involvement of government, that's not the local fire department or emergency management's responsibility. It's everybody's responsibility!

What the government can do to is develop, test and refine emergency plans. They have a limited amount of skills and resources and can't get to somebody to assist everybody. The first and most important thing for everybody is to save a life. This is what has changed in the last 5 to 10 years. FEMA ODIC, the Office of Disability Integration and Coordination, just had its 10th anniversary. FEMA has ten regions around the country with one person who is the disability specialist in each FEMA region. That single person covers four or five states. Can they possibly do everything to assist people with disabilities or people with access and functional needs? No way! People talk about the top-down approach. People talk about the grassroots approach. I'm a strong believer in the satellite approach. Top-down has to talk to the people who are at the local level. Local level people have to communicate back up. I don't know if everybody has talked about or heard of the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act. That's administered through the FCC. As a sub-part of this Communications and Accessibility Act, I was on the Emergency Access Advisory Committee. The purpose of that committee is to establish what people can do for next-generation 9-1-1. Next-generation 9-1-1, starting to come online, will make available voice, data, video and images available through 9-1-1. So with that we will get the ability to *text* to 9-1-1. AT&T, Verizon and others are still trying to work this out. But this is something else that can help with communication for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Remember, if something is working, it's a process. Nothing is going to get fixed in one day. As of last year, it actually came out on my birthday of last year--what a present for me—a guidebook for providing effective communication for all people was published. *The Effective Communication for People with Disabilities: Before, During, and After Emergencies*, by the National Council On Disabilities is a thick book meant for guidance for government and communities and for everybody related to the whole community approach.

Infrastructure in government agencies. Police are going to be looking out for incidents of grave public safety. Firefighters, suppress major fires. They do what they can to save lives. Everything else we're talking about here is not life-threatening. EMS, firefighters, police are going to get to you later if your problem is not life threatening. Here's when you have to be thinking about yourself. I like cartoons and I think this is a very important one. It shows the two firefighters asking the family what they lost. It shows their destroyed home and everything gone in the background. In the foreground you see the child and the parents there. Everybody is safe, no injuries. Firefighters ask them what they lost. Nothing. That's what's important to first responders. My background is a first responder. Primary importance is to save your life.

What do we who are deaf or hard of hearing we care about? Yes, we care about life but communication is a priority. This is from *Horton Hears a Who*. It's a Dr. Seuss book that was made into a movie. It is about a whole community that was in a little tiny molecule, like a little seed. So they didn't get destroyed, they would try to make enough noise saying, "We are here." That's what everybody in the deaf or hard of hearing community is trying to do. We want to make sure we get the communication, and we get the inclusion, the access and representation that's needed.

Emergency operations plan. This is what government agencies have and what a good business has to protect the responsibilities of the organization and what resources they're going to need in an emergency or disaster. Resources can be people or property, things that need to be involved.

Community leaders. That's everybody in here, everybody in this room. Return home and talk to your agency. Tell them what you require for communication access. You want to participate if they have a training drill. Cascade Rising is a big drill that FEMA is doing in 2016. Contact somebody and say you want to be involved in that drill. Contact somebody at the local level and ask if, "Do you have any training drills that I can be involved in? I'm deaf or hard of hearing and I want to tell you what communication gaps exist." This is a very long list, but a very important list of what you need to do to include people that are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind in preparedness.

Accommodations. Video public service announcements, workshops, seminars, and town hall meetings should all have interpreters or captions if needed. One thing that I often tell the public agencies is to make sure they provide a form that says "Accommodations will be provided on request." That shows people in

the community that you've thought about this before. You want to talk to the local service providers, people who provide interpreting services, CART services and talk to the assisted living facilities also. They might house people with disabilities. Talk with them about how you can get the deaf or hard of hearing community involved other than yourself. I'm looking to promote other advocates to do everything that I'm doing both professionally and personally. So you have to get out there to protect yourselves and protect other people that you know that are deaf or hard of hearing. Collaborate with local television media. Local television media don't always have the best captioning. They don't always have a sign language interpreter in the media. So it's very important that you communicate the problems with the local media. Tell them what they need to have. And if they don't do what they are supposed to do, you can file a complaint with the FCC. If you go to the website [FCC.gov](http://FCC.gov), it is very easy to file a complaint. The reason I say file a complaint is for quantity. If one guy, me, starts filing a complaint once a month and the FCC gets that information, they're going to see that one person is having a problem. They're not necessarily going to get back to me. But if 50 or 100 or people each month send complaints about problems with the captioning, that's when results are going to happen.

We had some recent flooding in my area one county north and the Emergency Management Director talked on tv about local evacuation. There was no effective captioning. It was not working. They had a close-up shot of her face so if there was an interpreter to the side, you couldn't see her or him. This omission was communicated to the state after the fact and that will be corrected in the future. But it's something that if you don't have communication beforehand, it's not going to happen. So you have to think what you as a community can do to improve these things and get involved. Contact your local broadband provider, cable provider, let them know what's important. Talk to your local emergency management.

Captioning and public information. You cannot have what's happening in the picture and at the bottom captioning. You have breaking news and it's obscured covered by the captioning and both of them are hiding the interpreter. If that's happening, is that effective communication? Absolutely not! How do you correct that? You communicate with your local providers. You tell them what you require for communication access.

These are the same recommendations that I give to emergency management and first responders. A lot of times even if there are sign language interpreters, even if there are caption providers available, it takes time to get them in place.

So using signage and communication boards is very important. Smartphones, voice recognition, typing on a cell phone, pen and paper are all things we've talked about before. Add gestures. For those of us whose sign language is not perfect, we talk to our friends who are deaf or hard of hearing using gestures. Does that work? In an emergency, absolutely. First responders are not going to in most cases know American Sign Language. One of the things that I often tell them is you are not going to have a sign language interpreter folded up in the back of a fire truck. You are not going to have a CART provider in the trunk of a police car. But you can write things down. You can point. You can make gestures. The average person knows 500 gestures that are effective. And that's the same thing that we give information to responders. It's the same thing that you can pass on to them when you advocate for yourselves in the deaf and hard of hearing community.

Sheltering. I already talked about all of this stuff pretty well. But these are some of the things that should be available for communication access. Make sure that everything is accessible through visual means, as well as audio. I'm a previous responder myself and I can remember 15-20 years ago making the same mistakes that now I absolutely fight to never see happening again. I can remember being a hard of hearing person, a civilian police specialist driving around in a mandatory evacuation area with the loud speaker saying you needed to evacuate. For a person who is deaf or hard of hearing who is at home, that loud speaker does no good. Zero effect.

You need to get people thinking about other communication methods.

Remember I mentioned about people who are deaf-blind and other people with disabilities? Considering the needs of those people. Also consider service animals. At shelters, service animals' accommodations need to be considered. If you have a service animal and there's ever the possibility that you might need to go to a public shelter, it's imperative that you communicate with your local emergency management that you have a service animal.

I give make sure first responders understand that interpreters are not translators. Communication will be visual. Responders need to understand that everything is going to be interpreted and not translated.

Also responders need to understand when it's appropriate to use a community interpreter and when Video Remote Interpreting, VRI, might be effective. You have a hearing person and a deaf person in the same place using an iPad for the visual communication. Will that work in a hospital for pre-op for surgery?

Obviously no. You need a community interpreter for that. The other thing I often say about VRI is it is very technology dependent. If the Internet goes down, boom, you just lost your communication. Same thing with remote captioning.

Coordinating with interpreting agencies and having contracts and agreements in your local area in place must be set up before time, before disaster strikes. A lot of local agencies will say, "We cannot afford it. We don't have the money for an interpreter." But let me tell you, the cost will increase exponentially if there's been no plan for it and you need an interpreter in an emergency.

The last little acronym, and I throw a lot of acronyms out here, is SOPs. That means Standard Operating Procedures that all fire departments and law enforcement agencies have. Be familiar with what an agency is required to do to get an interpreter in place, to get a CART provider in place. The reason you should be familiar with it is you need to understand that it may take an hour or two before they get an interpreter in place. If you have an emergency, you may need to figure out communication situations before effective communication is really in place for you. If you get stopped by the police on a traffic stop, is it effective communication to pass notes back and forth, police to driver, if you have a deaf or hard of hearing driver? The Department of Justice says yes. But if you get arrested, do they need to provide an interpreter for you? Yes, absolutely. If you're a witness for a crime, if you're a victim for a crime or if you're making a statement, you need to make sure that effective communication is in place in all cases.

Here is a true story about someone who lost her home in Hurricane Sandy. When she returned to her home, she found a red tag in the front window. Nobody could explain to her what that red tag meant. So she went to the disaster recovery center. At the disaster recovery center, she saw a sign that said, "If you need an interpreter, if you need large print, if you need braille, TTY, any of these things, just ask." So she asked. She's culturally deaf. ASL is her first language. She's also a CDI, a Certified Deaf Interpreter. There was no ASL interpreter there at the disaster recovery center. They had a bunch of people bumping into each other trying to figure out what to do to provide the information my friend needed. The next day when she returned; they had taken down the sign. Now is that any agency's fault? Maybe but with communication, where the fault lies doesn't matter. The communication must move forward. It's more about training people on what you need to do in the future. The disaster recovery center had iPad, an amplified phone, a TTY all set up at the disaster recovery center and none of the equipment was plugged in. Nobody knew how to use any of the communication equipment. Nobody could explain to her what that meant what that big red tag in her window meant. It basically indicated you couldn't go in the house because it was off the foundation. This person didn't get an interpreter or effective communication until three or four weeks later when she contacted the newspaper.

Then FEMA called her the next day. Sandy is in the past; big improvements have been made. Is everything the government's responsibility? No! It's your personal responsibility to make sure that you have the effective communication that you need. You need to start the communication now.

The advocacy. Learn about community alerts, warnings and evacuation routes. Take some training. You want to network and help other people find out where it's important to be involved. One of the things that I often found when I spoke speaking to emergency managers, was their saying they saying they didn't have a big deaf or hard of hearing community. Where are they? In the state of Florida, we have 3.1 million people who are deaf or hard of hearing. 3.1 million! Where do they live? Mostly in my county, in Miami, the south Florida area, Jacksonville, and then scattered out in rural areas all over the state. Sometimes they are older people, sometimes returning veterans, sometimes they are people who are culturally deaf. All those communication needs must to be addressed. But the discussion has to be started by the community. That whole community approach I keep mentioning actually started with President Obama. Administrator Fugate cautioned that if we plan for people with disabilities *after* a disaster, we fail. Planning for people with access and functional needs is very important *before* disaster strikes. There's no such thing as a "vulnerable population." In a disaster situation, everybody is vulnerable! It's more important to focus on the needs of an individual, the needs of a family, of a group, of a whole community.

These are ways that you can get involved. CERT is a big one, such as participating in drills. We, St. Pete College, don't do anything for disability training without involving real people with disabilities. I am not going to have somebody pretend to be deaf. I'm going to have somebody in the training who really is deaf. If somebody uses a wheelchair or a walker and we need that as part of our drill, we bring somebody in. Volunteer and become involved.

Advocacy work. One of the things I often say is you're always looking to have people volunteer to be involved in training. You don't ask police officers to volunteer to go out to work with responders. You don't have firefighters go out and work with responders. You don't have interpreters go out into the community and work for free. They're professionals. You don't have CART providers go out and work for free. There has to be a plan in place to pay people.

I think we're pretty much out of time. If anybody has any specific questions that they would like to ask me, they're certainly welcome to do that.

**Audience Member:** Now you can purchase solar batteries for solar cells that can charge your equipment real cheap. Only they are square, not round. You need to check to make sure the batteries will work to charge your batteries.

**Chris Littlewood:** I have a solar charger for a cell phone as part of my emergency kit. Solar power is a great thing.

**Audience Member:** You can also just buy a battery that will store enough juice to charge a cell phone six, seven, eight times? It won't work generally with rechargeable batteries. They're not strong enough.

**Chris Littlewood:** Also keep in mind in a major disaster. If you live in Joplin, Missouri or around Hurricane Sandy, people were without power for 2-3 *weeks*. Solar power wins over battery power. Having something in place and keeping in mind your reserve and how much is left is very important. Those are all good preparedness examples. Think about all these things. Discuss it with your family and friends. Thank you.

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