

# Environmental Justice: Inclusive Emergency Preparedness for Persons With Disabilities



**Liz Treston**

*City Council Vice President  
Long Beach NY*



**Carol Myers**

*Occupational Therapists for Environmental Action*



The Medical Society Consortium on  
**CLIMATE & HEALTH**



The Medical Society Consortium on  
**CLIMATE & HEALTH**

Sandy and Me  
A Tale of Riding Out the Storm in Long  
Beach, NY

Hon. Elizabeth M. Treston, M.A./SLP



# SUSTAIN OUR ABILITIES

[SustainOurAbilities.org](https://SustainOurAbilities.org)



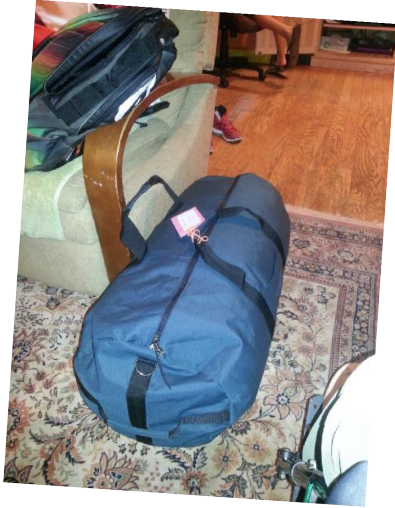
Days before Sandy NOT thinking to Prepare. Why?



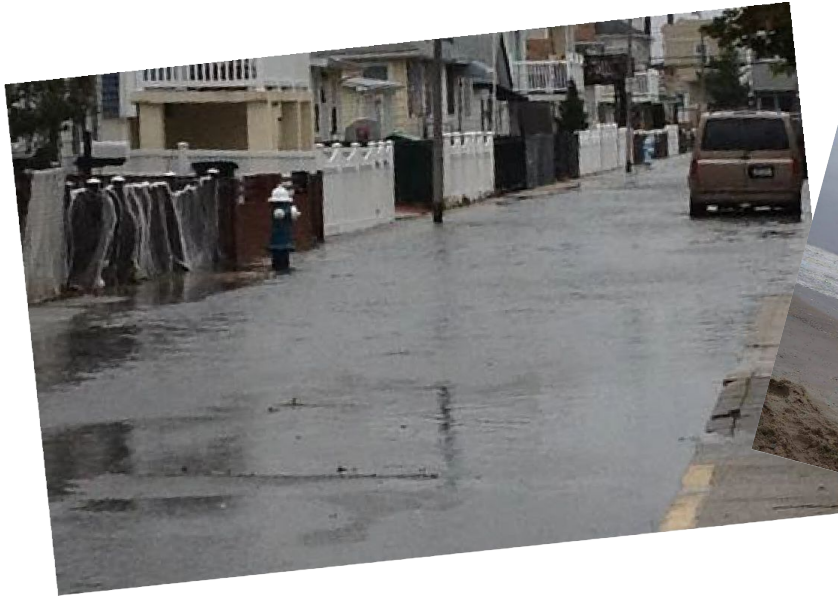


**No where was  
there a game plan  
for Sandy.**

October  
28th



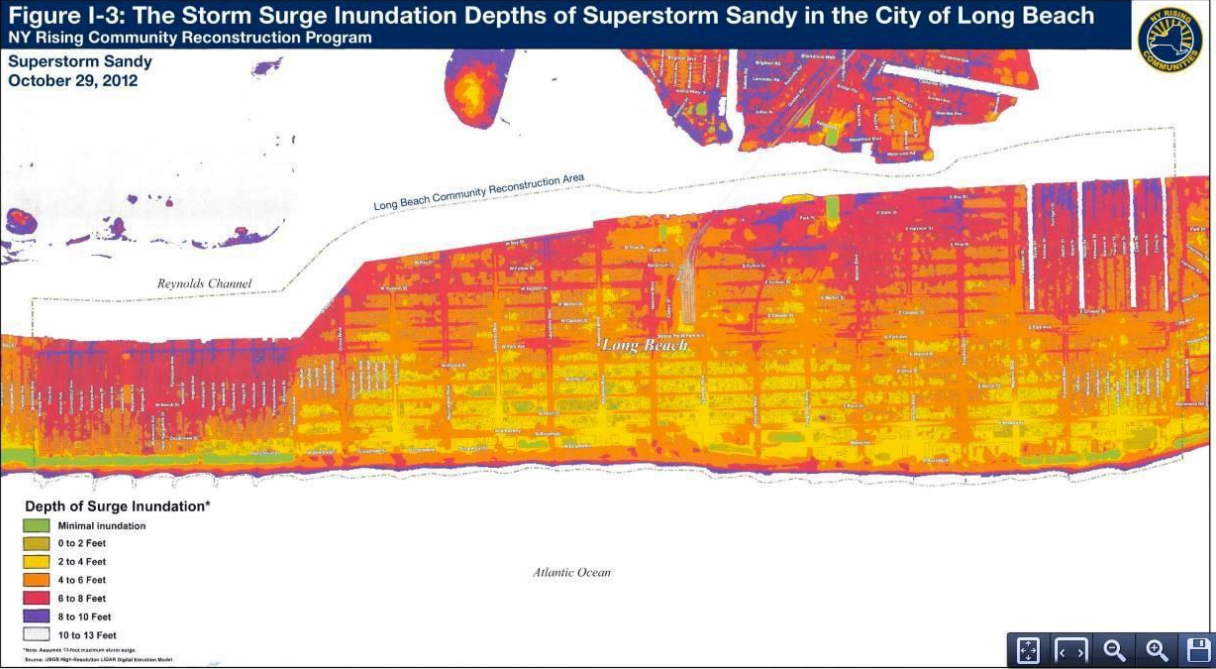
Photos of To Go Bag (L) father and son making sandbags for their home



**3 p.m. high tide.  
Lulled into a false  
sense of safety.**

Photo of street filling with water from bay in

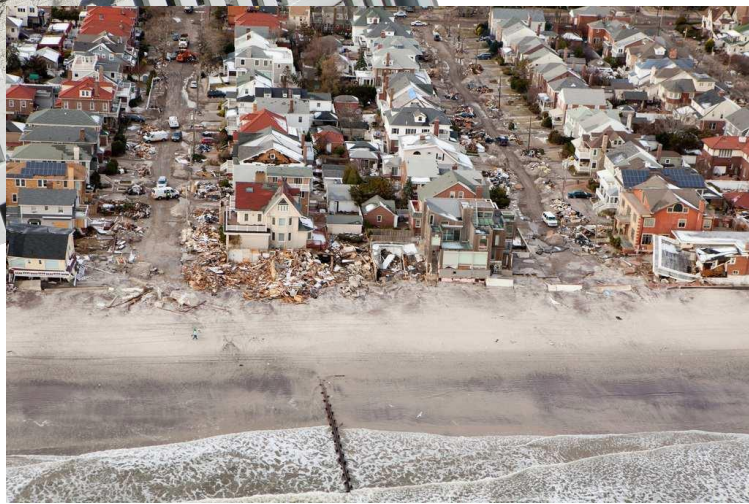
# Storm Surge.





# After the Water Pulled Back

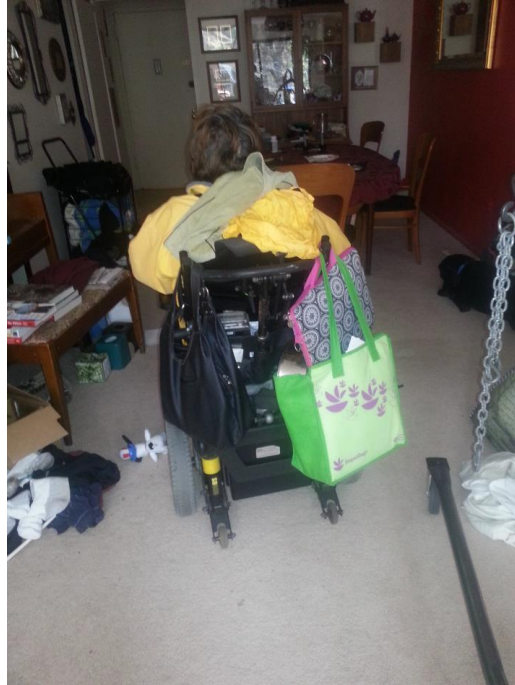




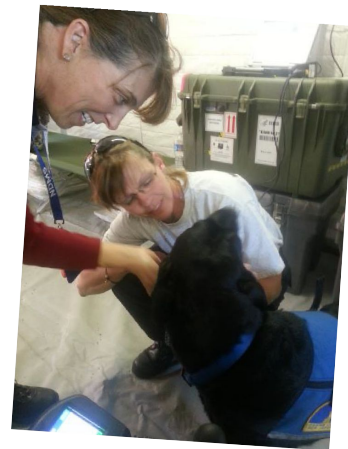
# No heat, no electric.



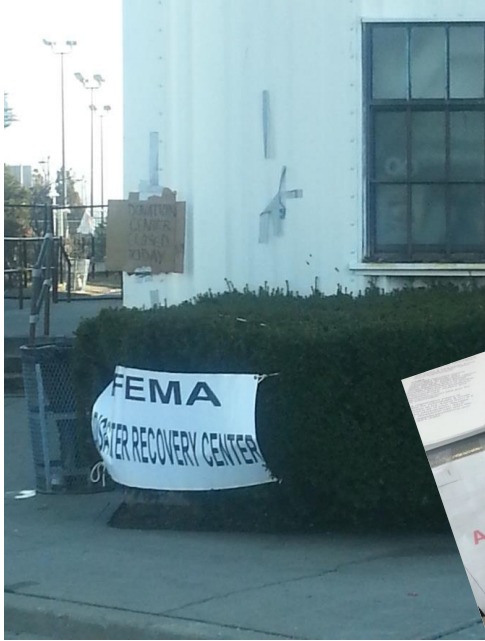
After evacuation Access needs fail.



# Inaccessible after facilities



# Everything Becomes FEMA to a Disaster Survivor





**Government is overwhelmed. Where do “victims” go for help?**











37 Wyoming Ave

Long Beach, New York



Google, Inc.



Street View - Jun 2017



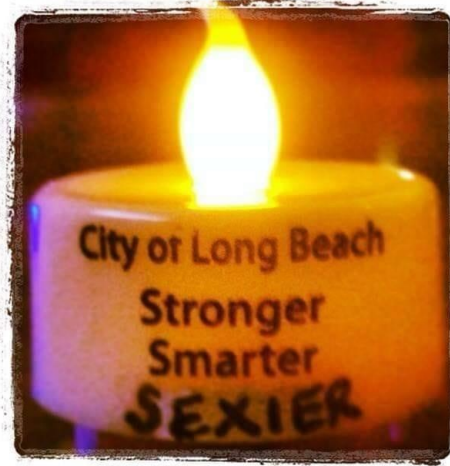
Google





Long Beach Community Organizations Active In Disasters

COOPERATION • COMMUNICATION • COORDINATION • COLLABORATION



NASSAU COUNTY

## Sandy contractors targeted

Displaced victims of fraud are urged to file complaints

BY GANICE FIBETTE  
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Nassau County Executive Laura Curran and Legis. Denise Ford (R-Long Beach) on Monday urged victims of fraud by superstorm Sandy contractors to file complaints, and said they were considering new legislation to strengthen protections for displaced homeowners.

"We are here today to wage war on unscrupulous contractors," said Curran, standing in front of an incomplete home one block from the beach. "Any resident who has been taken advantage of by a licensed or unlicensed contractor should know that they are not alone."

Curran is asking all county residents who feel they have been victims to log complaints with the county's Office of Consumer Affairs.

Long Beach homeowner Liz



Liz Treston, in a wheelchair, says her Long Beach home was damaged by superstorm Sandy and she waits for its completion so she can move back. Laura Curran, left, also spoke out against fraud Monday.

Treston, 57, said she is the victim of a contractor who for years has delayed completion of her Wyoming Avenue house. Treston, who uses a wheelchair, is unable to move back

into her elevated home until it is completed. She lives in a rental apartment nearby because of the construction delays and has paid more than \$200,000 to her contractor.

More protections for consumers are needed, Treston said. "I appreciate the politicians stepping up, but it's time for the laws to be changed,"

Treston said.

Curran said the county maintains a database of fraudulent contractors that is updated online. She also said the county was creating a program that would require licensed contractors to complete continuing education courses.

The issue is timely, Ford said. There are two deadlines for homeowners who are applying for funding through the state's New York Rising disaster recovery grant program: June 1 for those located in a 100-year floodplain where elevating the house is optional, and Sept. 1 for homes that sustained more than 50 percent storm damage and raising of the house is mandated by the municipality.

Ford said residents who are victimized by contractors post-Sandy should file grievances with N.Y. Rising and also with the county.

Ford said she is working with other county legislators on a possible bill to increase penalties for contractors who defraud victims of the 2012 storm. "We need to strengthen our laws," Ford said. "We need to protect our homeowners."

“Disasters are always inclusive.  
Response and recovery are not,  
--- unless we plan for it.” (i)

(i) June Isaacson Kailes, MSW, Harris Family Center for Disability and Health

Policy at Western University of the Health Sciences.

**Thanks for Listening!**

- **Environmental Justice: Inclusive Emergency Preparedness for the Persons with Disabilities**


- **Carol Myers, OTR, MA**



# A Few Sobering Facts About Inequities

- ❑ **In 2019, more than 41 million U.S. adults were living with a disability.** United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 2023
- ❑ **Warnings and other important messages are lacking for people with disabilities (low vision, blindness, hearing loss, or mobility issues) to plan for extreme weather events.** EPA, 2023



- ❑ **Housing units occupied by people with disabilities are more likely to be in neighborhoods with higher crime rates and higher risks of extreme weather, including floods, hurricanes, tornadoes and extreme heat.** Community Living Policy, 2020
  - ❑ **People with disabilities often become institutionalized during and after a disaster and may not return home.** U.S. Census Bureau, 2022
  - ❑ **Disasters disrupt access to essential medical care/DME/ supplies/essential medication** EPA, 2023
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❑ **Children with disabilities and their families are at a higher risk of injury or death in emergency situations than families that do not include children with disabilities.** Flanagan SK, Sterman JJ, Merighi JR, Batty R., 2020

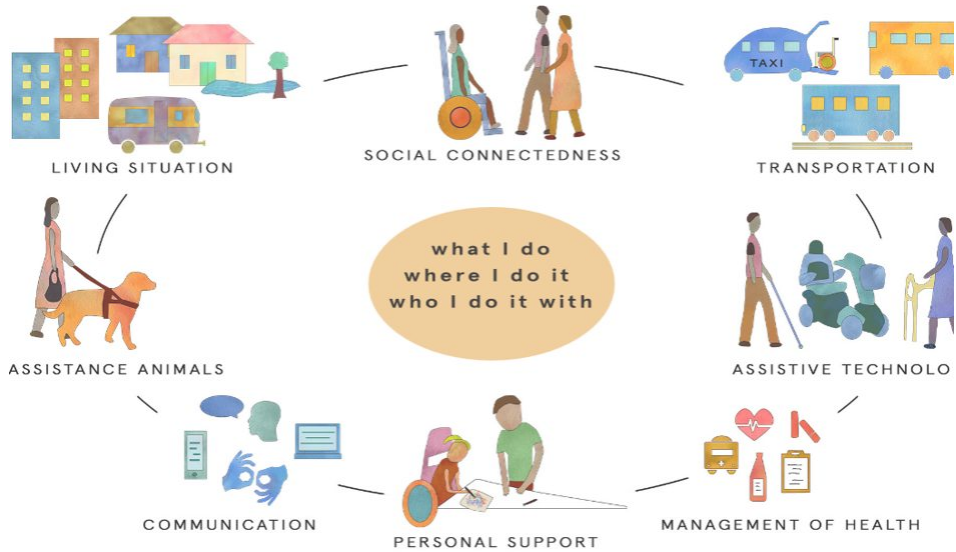
❑ **“Newly” disabled clients never think like someone with a disability, encounter new mobility and other issues, are unsure of resources, and assume technology will always work.**

- ❑ **Discrepancies in existing essential services such as accessible transportation systems, housing, and healthcare options increase the hardship for people with disabilities to evacuate safely.** National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), 2021

# **Person-Centered Emergency Preparedness (C-PEC) Workbook**

## **A Brief Overview**

An inclusive approach for people with disabilities to tailor emergency preparedness planning to their individual support needs.



**-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP) Capability Wheel**  
 ed with permission ([www.collaborating4inclusion.org](http://www.collaborating4inclusion.org))

# 4 Steps to Increase Emergency Preparedness



# Perceived Preparedness for a Disaster

## Stage 1

I am NOT prepared, and I do not intend to prepare in the next year. ▲

## Stage 2

I am NOT prepared, but I intend to start preparing in the next year. ●

## Stage 3

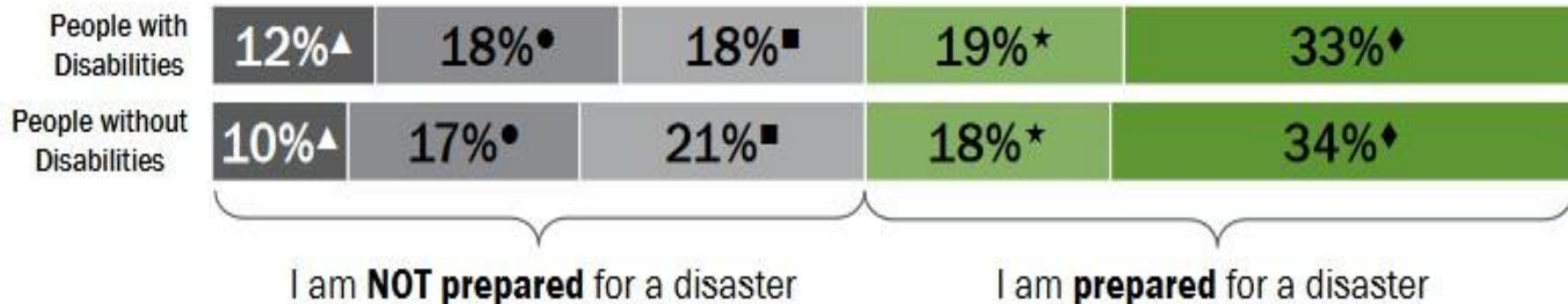
I am NOT prepared, but I intend to get prepared in the next six months. ■

## Stage 4


I have been prepared for LESS than a year. ★

## Stage 5

I have been prepared for MORE than a year. ◆




## **ADVOCACY**

- ❑ **The Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (REAADI) for Disasters**
  - ❑ **The Disaster Medicaid Relief Act (DMRA)**
- 
- A blue triangular graphic is located in the bottom right corner of the slide, pointing towards the top right.



## **Conclusion...**

**People with disability often navigate every day in inaccessible environments. They develop individual strategies for optimizing their strengths, managing their support needs and adapting to changing situations. These are strengths that people with disability bring to emergency preparedness.**



# References & Resources

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 2023 Climate Change and the Health of People with Disabilities <https://www.epa.gov/climateimpacts/climate-change-and-health-people-disabilities>

FEMA 2023 National Household Survey on Disaster Preparedness <https://fema-community-files.s3.amazonaws.com/2023-National-Household-Survey.pdf>

Flanagan SK, Sterman JJ, Merighi JR, Batty R. Bridging the gap, how interprofessional collaboration can support emergency preparedness for children with disabilities and their families: an exploratory qualitative study. BMC Public Health. 2023 Apr 28;23(1):777. doi: 10.1186/s12889-023-15580-4. PMID: 37118724; PMCID: PMC10140711.

National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) (2021). Disability Equity During Disasters. <https://ncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/8-9-21-NCIL-READDI-and-DRMA-Toolkit.pdf>

READDI & DRMFA Act <https://reaadi.com/reaadi-drama/>

The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies  
<https://disasterstrategies.org/disaster-resources/>

# References & Resources

Trivedi, K., Meschede, T., & Gardiner, F. (2020) Community Living Policy. Unaffordable, Inadequate, and Dangerous: Housing Disparities for People with Disabilities in the U.S  
<https://heller.brandeis.edu/community-living-policy/images/pdfpublications/2020aprilhousingbrief.pdf>

United Spinal Association Ready to Roll <https://unitedspinal.org/ready-to-roll/>

United States Census Bureau Week 52 Household Pulse Survey: December 9- December 18, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2023/demo/hhp/hhp52.html>

Video Emergency Preparedness for All <https://vimeo.com/89664822>

Villeneuve, M., Sterman, J., & Llewellyn, G.L. (2018). Person-Centered Emergency Preparedness: A process tool and framework for enabling disaster preparedness with people with chronic health conditions and disability. Centre for Disability, Research and Policy, University of Sydney, NSW 2006

[www.colaborating4inclusion.org](http://www.colaborating4inclusion.org)