

EARTHQUAKE CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

One of the segments of the school population that has been left out of the written school guidelines for earthquake preparedness has been those students with special needs. Students with diabetes, hypertension or any of the maladies that require special diets, daily periodic medications or special equipment and supplies in order to sustain life, activities, dignity or reasonable comfort have not been given adequate considerations in planning for disasters that cause isolation. What could be a mere inconvenience for able-bodied students could become a major threat to the students who have special needs.

BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE

- Evacuation plans must provide for problems involved in students with mobility, visual and hearing impairments. Special evacuation transportation provisions may be necessary - both from the school building to the assembly area(s) and away from the school area. Any plans must also address assistance that will be provided to mentally retarded students during and after the earthquake.
- Special needs students should have a back-up supply of vital medication, equipment or supplies with them, at school or en-route. Those students or their teachers should be prepared to bring the extra medication or supplies if evacuation from the school premises is ordered.
- These students should have in their possession an individual emergency card describing their special needs. The cards should list information such as; disability, medications and their application frequencies, mobility constraints, attendant needs, allergies, primary physician, etc.
- Any power requirements for special sustaining equipment, if normal power is off for a long period of time, should be considered.
- Assignments must be made to a staff member or a special team along with training for managing the special needs of these students.
- Allow for individual self sufficiency of these students as much as possible by getting them involved in preparedness and response activities. Include in response planning obvious ways in which special needs students can assist others in response to disastrous conditions - include them in your drill.
- Mobility impaired students should practice moving their wheel chairs or having them move into doorways (or other designated safe area), locking

their wheels and covering their heads with a book or with their arms or hands.

- Partnerships should be established between the able bodied and special needs students. The able bodied partners should be prepared (and practice during drills) to assist the special need student.
- Rescue teams should be made aware of the best way to rescue special needs students. As an example, mobility impaired students should be allowed to instruct rescue team members on the best way to move them from the hazardous area. The fireman's carry may be dangerous to someone with respiratory problems.
- Special response provisions may have to be made for ensuring 'duck and cover' protection for these students. Barriers to earthquake safety are highly individual for them and accommodation plans may have to fit the requirements. The guidance provided by this document should be modified to fit each special situation of each special needs student. **NOTE: ANY SPECIAL RESPONSE PROCEDURE MUST BE TESTED DURING EARTHQUAKE DRILLS.**

DURING THE EARTHQUAKE

- Special needs students or able bodied partners should implement special 'duck and cover' actions. An example; mobility impaired students should know how (through practice) to get in doorways, lock wheelchair wheels and cover head with book, arms or hands.

AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

- For mobility impaired students, evacuation by themselves may be extremely difficult or impossible because of obstacles in their paths or because electric dependent machines are not functioning (i.e., elevator). Special preplanned assistance must be provided.
- Any special medications, supplies and equipment for the special needs students must be transported with them during evacuation.
- If evacuation from school area is called for, utilize special transportation arrangements.
- Re-establish special power requirements for the equipment of special needs students as soon as possible.
- Rescue of special needs students should be accomplished utilizing special techniques as practiced.