- This is German.

Thank you, Eva, for having
us, and thank you, everyone.

Again, my name is German Parodi,

and this training is brought to you

in part by grant from the Ford Foundation

and many gracious donors.

On the screen, you see the
title of today's presentation,

"Disaster Preparedness for
People with Disabilities."

At the top, you see The Partnership logo,

a sun with four icons,
a swirling hurricane,

a cloud with a thunderbolt,

a house with a crack, and a tornado.

And at the bottom, our website,

www.disasterstrategies.org.

Couple additional accessibility reminders.

We have ASL interpreters in
person. And thank you both.

And they are available via Zoom,

and there are Zoom auto-captions enabled.

This meeting is being
recorded for the purposes

of a post-production, which
Eva will share later on.

It'll take us a couple
weeks to get it ready.

Moving on.

Who we are, oh, go ahead.

- This is Shaylin.

To share a little bit more
about who we are and what we do

at The Partnership for
Inclusive Disaster Strategies,

or The Partnership in short,

as we know that's quite a mouthful,

is, in summary, we are your
Disability and Disaster Hub.

And some ways that we do our work and act

as the nation's Disability
and Disaster Hub is

through our direct support to
disabled disaster survivors,

primarily through our
Disability and Disaster Hotline

that connects people with
disabilities, loved ones,

and stakeholders to local
resources, supports,

and assistance throughout disasters.

And that information to the
hotline will be in the slides

towards the end in the resources,

so you have access to that information.

We also do a lot of work
supporting organizations

that support people with
disabilities throughout disasters,

much like disability partners here today

and supporting them in their work

when they were responding to
hurricanes, Helene and Milton,

and meeting the needs of the
disability community impacted

by those disasters,

and certainly, many more
disasters to come as we know.

Other things that we do as the disability

and disaster hub is strengthening
community resilience,

bringing folks together,
getting prepared for disasters,

and sharing good and promising practices

around inclusive emergency management,

both for organizations serving
people with disabilities,

but also government agencies
that are responsible

for upholding our rights

and civil rights obligations
throughout disasters.

We also do a lot of work
throughout all times

to increase education and awareness,

particularly on the
disproportionate impact

that people with disabilities
face in disasters.

Something that we'll talk
about throughout today is

that disproportionate impact that folks

with disabilities face,

and that is that we are two to
four times more likely to die

or be injured in disasters
than non-disabled people.

It's a hard reality to
think and to really process

and hear that sort of
statistic in that phrasing,

but it's something that is gonna continue

to ground us in our conversation

of personal preparedness today.

And then we use all of this
to influence our advocacy,

our policy, and our systems change

to ensure that our civil rights
obligations are being upheld

throughout disasters,

influencing policy that
creates better outcomes

for disabled disaster survivors,

and advocating for our rights
throughout before, during,

and after disasters and emergencies.

- What you will learn
today, by the end of today,

you will start to understand

and hopefully expand your knowledge

about how to create an emergency plan,

when to shelter in place,
and when to evacuate,

and what to put in your emergency kits

amongst many other insights.

As we all begin sharing, please feel free.

This is a safe space to
share, ask questions,

and ultimately, you know,

we want to learn and grow
together, but also have fun.

And as we get started,

you all at the end of last September

and ongoing awful impacts
from tropical storm Helene,

I wanted to start off by
asking you all a question,

whoever like to share, how
ready do you feel for disasters?

Very ready, kind of ready,
or not ready at all?

And that's okay.

- This is Susan. My answer
is three, not ready at all.

- And that's all right. That's
what we're here for today.

Thanks, Susan.

Anyone else who would like to share?

- And folks in Zoom, feel free
to drop your info in the chat

and we'll be happy to voice that out loud

for folks in the room as well.

So, we're all sharing space together.

- We're all here for,

at least, if we can leave
out of kind of ready,

this training will help with that.

Moving on.

Why planning for disasters is important.

On the screen, you see a graph

showing North Carolina's
billion dollar impacts

from 1980 to 2024.

It's a bar graph titled

"North Carolina Billion Dollar
Events" from those dates.

It shows yearly accounts of weather events

that cost over $1 billion in damage.

Each bar is color coded by disaster type.

Drought in maroon, flooding in navy,

freezing in light blue,
severe storm in green,

and tropical cyclones
in yellow and orangey,

and winter storms in dark blue.

A blue label in the center reads,

"120 events surpassing $120 billion"

and the highest frequency of
billion dollar events occurs

in the most recent years after 2016

as you can tell on the graph.

This clearly shows an
increase in North Carolina

and billion dollar disasters display

that there has been major
impact to life, economy,

and that certainly goes
into the independence

and self-determination of
people with disabilities.

Disasters are increasing.

The city of Asheville's
climate resilience assessment

identified three primary climate stressors

impacting your region.

Heavy precipitation, which
causes flooding and landslides,

drought, which leads to
wildfires and water shortages,

and extreme temperature variability.

As tropical storm Helene demonstrated,

extreme weather events can
lead to extended power outages,

communication infrastructure
and water outages.

And this is on the climate
reality in Asheville document

from the Sustainability
Department of Asheville.

A couple additional points,
disasters impact people

with disabilities disproportionately.

People with disabilities
are two to four times

more likely to die or
be injured in a disaster

than non-disabled people.

This is a United Nations statistics

gathering data from Katrina, Fukushima,

and other major disasters worldwide.

And during Helene in North Carolina,

15.9% of people in
disaster affected counties

had a disability compared to
13.5 in non-disaster counties,

showing that there is an increase,

a heightened percentage of
people with disabilities

that are in need of support afterwards.

And disasters impact not only
people with disabilities,

but also intersectional
at risk communities.

The Census Bureau found that one in four

or 138,000 mobile homes in North Carolina

were in counties with under
major disaster declaration

for Helene.

And also, in North Carolina,

volunteers poured into the
region with tons of food,

clothes, water, and other supplies,

and it still took days for
aid to reach some people,

particularly Black low income people.

And right, Asheville has
over 10% of the population,

African-American, the elderly,

and those living with disabilities,

and this is from a research
article that Capital B did.

And all of these resources are linked

in the slide deck that you'll receive.

So, now, we have a picture of...

how disasters are increasing in the region

and how our communities are affected.

But what is a disaster?

When we're speaking about a disaster,

according to FEMA, a disaster
causes a lot of people to die

or get hurt, damages, or
destroys buildings and homes,

makes it really hard for local

and state governments to
respond to people's needs.

In other words, local resources,

the disaster exceeds local resources.

The economy is negatively
affected for a long time

and it makes it very
difficult for local government

and businesses to help
outright, to help right away,

and thus state support or
federal support is requested.

That's how FEMA defines this disaster.

We know that we have different types

of emergencies and disasters.

We have minor emergencies, house fires,

house basement flooding.

We certainly have individual emergencies

when we have to call 911.

Things are happening every day

that local emergency
management services can handle.

Then there are limited
and potential emergencies,

things that could grow into
a major potential disaster

like a infrastructure damage,

a bridge collapsing,
a highway major crash.

And then we have major disasters

where the response exceeds the
local capacity as Helene did.

- We have a question.
- Go ahead.

- The current administration
has a budget issue taken,

collecting data from the disasters out,

so it'll no longer be reported,

the phenomenal amount that's
being spent lost in disasters.

So, we won't know. It'll
be a big gray area.

And where if the US removing its funding

and would like to dismantle
the United Nations,

how will that affect disaster response?

And FEMA is on the verge

of maybe being closed out completely.

How will those recent affect
our being able to respond?

- This is German. That's an
important question. Thank you.

And what was your name again?

- Frank.
- Thank you, Frank.

- We are still, let's...

I compare the current
situation a little bit

with a disaster.

We are still in the middle of it.

We don't know what the
repercussions fully will be.

We certainly hear from
the federal government

that there will be more on the state

and local county services
to support during disasters.

They are discussing.

There is a damage assessment
that happens to identify if,

currently, if FEMA is needed,

and there are discussions of
them at the federal level,

increasing the threshold potentially up...

four times greater than it
currently is for FEMA to support.

Still, all is a lot in the air.

What we can do is better prepare

as if no one is coming for some time.

There are different bodies
that need to prepare

for this differently from local government

to individuals and organizations.

As individuals, part of what
we're going through today is

increasing your personal preparedness,

being able to do what you can to survive

if something bad happens
for a number of days

or extended period of time.

And localities need to start preparing

and allocating their budgets

of how they will support their residents

with less federal support
is what we can say now.

Is that a little bit helpful, Frank?

- Thank you.

- Any other reflections?

And please don't hesitate to interrupt

or add them in the chat if you're on Zoom.

Part of preparing is knowing your risks

and we have a number of
risks already identified.

Drought, extreme weather
variability and so on.

But to put that more into perspective,

disasters coming in your
areas, severe storms

from tropical storms now
two winter storms as well,

and all of this cuts flooding, landslides.

You also experience extreme
weather, heat and cold,

drought, which you've
heard of wildfires, right?

South of you in South Carolina
all the way up to New York

and aNew Jersey, and that is
particular due to drought,

which, in many cases, causes wildfires.

And as I was just answering
Frank a moment ago,

what we can do is create
a culture of preparedness.

Know that a disaster
can happen at any time.

Update your plan regularly

and we'll go into what does
it look like to making a plan.

And making preparedness
a part of your routine.

Practice your plan often.

And how to get ready for
disasters or emergencies.

We encourage people with disabilities

and our friends, family,

to know that the first thing we can do,

the world is hard already.

Ableism attacks us every day.

But we are a protected class

and under given the Americans
with Disabilities Act.

So, the first thing that we
encourage people to know is

your rights during a disaster.

This is a very brief overview.

Whenever disaster related
programs and services

are provided to the general public,

that could be transportation, sheltering,

delivery or provision of supplies.

These must be accessible

and inclusive of people with disabilities

that people can access the service

and that there are services
for people with disabilities.

That's the inclusive part.

Shelters cannot deny you
entry because you're disabled.

You have the right to
physically accessible

and otherwise ADA compliant shelters.

And know that if one shelter you get to

is not accessible under the ADA,

if, in short proximity,

there is another shelter
that is accessible

and they can support you if you need to

with that transportation, even
if it's a couple blocks away,

that's still compliant with the ADA.

And you have the right to
equally effective communication.

For example, cell language
interpreters, large print,

braille, specific technology and so on.

You have the right to request
reasonable modifications

of policies and practices.

You have the right to
bring your service animal

with you in a shelter, in
a disaster recovery center,

or other public spaces

providing disaster related
programs and services.

And you have the right
not to go into a facility,

any type of congregate care
setting if you don't want to.

And disability rights are
never suspended in disasters.

Not everybody knows that,

but you absolutely can
remind them of that.

And if you're having problems,

that's why we have the
Disability Disaster Hotline

and Center for Independent Living

here can absolutely support.

We're also great partners

with Disability Rights North Carolina,

who are very engaged in disaster work.

So, now we've gone over some of our risks.

We have a link here for knowing
your rights more in depth.

Now, let's move into staying
informed and making a plan.

With making a plan,

oh, go ahead.

- Just so you all know that we have a copy

that we'll give you at the
end of the presentation

with some of this information

and also has step by step
how to create the plan.

Just so you know that we do have that.

So, you're not trying to
write down everything he says.

All right. Thank you.

- This is German. Thank you, Eva. Yes.

As Eva just shared, you will
be provided the slide deck

and an accompanying personal
preparedness checklist.

And this is also available digitally.

In making a plan,

plans start with having a
conversation with family, friends,

support networks, perhaps
in your faith community

or coworkers.

Making sure you know what
you're gonna do when,

if you have to shelter in place at home,

at a friend's house, at
church or temple, or at work,

or if you need to evacuate
from any of these places.

What is the plan? What are we gonna do?

Have we thought about it ahead of time?

Additional questions. Who are
the people that can help me?

What is my plan for sheltering in place?

And what is my plan for evacuating?

What is my plan if the power
is out for a long time?

And what is my communication plan?

Do I have what I need
in case of a disaster?

Does anybody think of other
questions you would add

in a conversation about making a plan?

- Hold on just a minute.

- Hey, this is Jessica.

Another big thing about that
I found out was medication.

You know, some persons with
disabilities have a hard time

without a disaster
getting their medications,

making sure they have them if
they don't have transportation

or a way to facilitate or whatever.

But that was another big thing is

we have at least a 30
day supply of able or...

You know, especially during
when there was no communication,

no one could get to communication
with the cell phones

or landlines or anything.

Medication was a big
point that was made to me

during the disaster.

- Yeah. Any other, that's a great point.

Any other reflection?

- Yes, this is Susan speaking.

Some of the things that we
learned from hurricane here was

the importance of having cash

because our power was out for so long,

you know, getting gas, going
to an ATM, getting food,

everything was cash only.

And also, because we had
no, some people had no food,

it was important to have
stuff in your pantry

since we couldn't cook.

Enough food in cans or
that's ready to eat within

for at least a good couple of days.

Same thing with water.

They talked about bottled
water or filling up your tub

or your sink with water.

I think one of the things that,

and I know you mentioned the one

about your communication plan.

As a person with a hearing
loss who was from the Midwest

and lives in Asheville,
we were not prepared

for the severity of this hurricane.

And that communication
the day of the storm,

we had no communication.

Cell phones, radios, everything was out.

And that was something I had
no control over for days.

And not knowing, you
know, where to get food,

where to get water, how
bad it was out there.

I think that was probably the number one.

And the biggest, most
terrifying feeling for me

was that lack of communication.

And again, hearing people
said the same thing,

that they couldn't communicate.

But it took so long
for things to get fixed

or repaired that, and in this day and age,

really, there was no excuse

why we didn't have better cell towers

or stronger cables underground or whatever

in infrastructure that
allow people to be able

to use at least their cell
phone texting or something.

Because so many people with hearing loss,

deaf, blind, hard of hearing,

we were just, we were very, very isolated,

as you said in the beginning
of your presentation.

- Thank you both. This is German.

Any other reflections?

Well, thank you both. Great points.

- One moment.

- Pets, pets other than service animals.

Pets that you can't take with you.

- Yes.
- One of my biggest learnings

was all of the things that I didn't have,

I have slowly acquired
and they are in a box now.

- Thank you. I don't think
there are any other questions.

Thank you, and we will go over

more on what to put in your home kit.

What to put in a go bag.
The medication point.

Very important.

Sometimes, governors
will institute a policy

where people can go to a pharmacy

and get an additional refill
before the storm comes with...

That's in some cases.

And around...

And afterwards if you've
lost it, there are...

If you are in a pharmacy chain like CVS,

Walgreens, Rite Aid, or
you may have locally.

If it's a chain, they
can share with each other

more information like your prescription

'cause maybe you've lost it in a disaster

and you lost a lot of your medication

to help with that timely refill.

But also, sometimes, we
don't take every pill,

every day, every moment.

And putting some aside and
checking it frequently.

And we'll talk more about that

to make sure it's not expired.

It's another way to add

to medication backup during disasters.

And the issue with communication

and the lack of it is major.

Right? Many of you know, may know that.

Your area in Asheville was
considered a climate haven.

There wasn't a lot of
preparedness thought put into

with the type of hazard that
Helene brought to you all.

But that's another reason why a lot

of the communication
infrastructure was damaged,

and given your mountainous geography,

it took longer for government
to be able to reinstitute that

with private business.

We saw the same, very
similar in Puerto Rico

after Hurricane Maria,

another area very mountainous

and people having to practically
come down the mountain

and find and park by a highway

where they could find a signal spot

just to be able to stay updated.

But we'll go more into
staying informed in a moment.

Follow emergency alerts.

They come via TV, radio.

They use social media a lot.

They as in the National Weather Service

and county emergency management agencies.

And you can also sign up for
wireless emergency alerts

to get them ahead of time on your devices.

FEMA also has an app that you
can use to apply to services.

It also has, it's also connected

to the National Weather
Service for advisories.

And there's also the Red Cross app.

And as our colleague earlier shared,

in case FEMA is not
around as it currently is,

giving an alternative app.

And on the personal level,

also having a fire alarm and
carbon monoxide detector.

Right now, the Red Cross
nationwide has a program

during the springtime
called Sound the Alarm.

And if you call your local Red Cross,

and at the end of the resources,

we provide their information,

you can schedule them to
come to your house for free,

install a firearm alarm,
carbon monoxide detector,

and if you request it, even work with you

to create a evacuation or
sheltering in place plan

for your home.

And also, the National
Weather Service will be using

better infographs that
display the impact of a storm

deeper into, not just by the coast,

but as it would impact in land.

So, pay attention to those new advisories

and the traditional weather
map and the color code.

Starting to plan and first steps.

The first step in developing
your disaster plan

can include deciding how
often you want to plan

for disasters, emergencies,
and extreme weather.

And note this in your calendar,

begin to create a social
network to assist you

if you want one.

And we all need help in any way.

And we do. Even if we
don't think we need help

or may need help,

during something, we may be injured.

We all one way or another need help.

And exchanging updated contact information

with your social network
if you already have one.

Setting times to review
your plan and rotate items,

so that your emergency kit
does not contain expired items.

And that's not only water,

which you should replace
at least once a year

and don't have it directly
exposed to sunlight

because the sun impacts the plastic,

and that creates, that poisons
the water, and medications.

If you have and you should
have batteries outside

of the flashlights or other devices.

Check them also for expiration time.

Setting priorities.

Decide what is most important

or most manageable to you.

If you can't complete some of these steps,

consider modifying them
to meet your needs.

In building your emergency kit,

remember, your kids
need to meet your needs.

Get a go bag ready that will
last for at least three days

is the best recommendation.

And a sheltering in place kit.

Our friend here shared
how they've already began

buying things that they've noticed.

And a kit at home,

it could be an area
right in your cupboard,

but separate from your
everyday items that you use.

And the items that you store water, food

for it to last you at least two weeks.

And we'll go over more on
what to include in your kit.

But sometimes, preparing is not easy.

It's not cheap.

So, how do we prepare with few resources?

Not everyone may be able to
have the time, the money,

or the space to gather all the items

that we will go over in a moment

that are suggested to add
to your emergency kit.

And that is okay. Any planning
is better than no planning.

If you have any amount of money available,

buy essentials like water.

It's the most important issue
that we see again and again.

And maybe also, you know,

chlorine tablets to clean water.

You've heard of the LifeStraw.

And these are, most
filters, if you use one,

try to educate yourself
about what it cannot filter.

Many things can,

not an issue so much for you guys,

but many filters cannot
filter out saltwater.

And as you can imagine
in the island countries

and Puerto Rico where there
will be a surge of ocean water

and that would damage the filters,

not only that the city uses,
but any private filter.

Include shelf stable food
that you can consume.

And some of us have dietary needs

and take that into consideration.

Include flashlights and batteries

and keep the batteries
outside of the flashlights.

Because often, the most common disaster

from hazards is power outages.

So, we must prepare for them.

Having solar-powered
battery chargers for phones

or other devices,

and a hand crank radio,

or a National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration,

NOAA, Weather Radio to receive alerts

and information about the
disaster and services afterwards.

And not having money does not
mean that you cannot do...

Not having money to prepare does not mean

that you cannot do any disaster planning.

We have a general no
cost preparedness tips

on our website that we have linked here.

And look for free items for your go bag

and your shelter in place kits,

perhaps in food pantries.

Some base groups, different
types of the year,

offer free items for you to take home

and other nonprofits in your community.

It is often difficult for
many people with disabilities

to have enough money
for everyday survival,

let alone extra to prepare for disasters.

And this is not your fault.

It's going to what FEMA
recommends one should have

in their at-home kit, water,

and FEMA recommends the best practice

and this is our global best practices.

One gallon per person per day

for at least three days.

This is pretty heavy already.

And think about a household of five.

And now, we're talking
about 15 gallons of water,

the storage of this, the
carrying of all this.

So, there was an earlier point about,

prepare as you can manage

and take that into consideration.

Food for at least three days.

And some best practices
to recommend two weeks.

But these are FEMA's recommendations.

And a manual can opener, a first a kit,

and you know, there are
many that you can buy,

or sometimes, they are for free.

But check the items
and consider what else,

how else do you need to personalize it

so it's useful for you.

Masks. And COVID-19
showed us if you're going

to be in a congregate space,

it's healthier to use a
mask in many situations,

but also if there's a wildfire nearby

or any other reason for
there to be low air quality.

Masks can help.

And battery-powered or hand crank radio,

as I mentioned a moment ago.

And some of them come with
tone alerts for warnings.

They also recommend including,
as I mentioned, flashlights

and extra batteries, chargers,

plastic sheeting and duct tape,

and that is specifically
for sheltering in place

in case of a biological
or radiological hazard

or you put plastic sheeting
around the corners,

over the windows, doors,

chimney areas and duct tape its corners.

And this would be a situation
that would be announced,

you know, by the emergency alert.

Wrenches or pliers to turn off utilities

like the water in your property.

Local maps 'cause I shared
that the power will go out.

We don't have Google maps anymore to know.

Also, and keep them updated, right,

for in case some areas,

you saw how many bridges were damaged

and knowing how to go around.

A whistle so you don't have to think

about screaming for a long time

if you are in that type of situation

that rescuers can hear you.

Moist towelettes and garbage
bags and plastic ties

in case keep yourself in hygiene.

And these are what FEMA recommends.

We also include disability
related supplies.

You know you best. You know
what those are for you.

And important documents.

Keeping important documents
in a waterproof bag,

like a zip lock bag.

And also, save them electronically
if possible on the cloud

and or on a thumb drive.

And consider including a
list of emergency contacts.

Your house or will or your apartment lease

or the house deed, I mean.

Your mortgage or deed.

And this will help with getting any local,

state, or federal services
based on the damage.

Health insurance and
primary doctor information,

copies of ID, birth certificate,
social security card,

or green card if applicable.

Prescription medication details.

Any dietary requirements.

Information on your custom
equipment if you have some.

And any information needed
about your service animal

or pet vet records and
or microchip information.

And when thinking about
our specific access needs

due to our disabilities,

if you have equipment like a
wheelchair, a walker, a cane,

a hearing aids, speech
devices, breathing machines,

consider what needs electricity to work.

And if it does,

how will you go about
it If the power is out?

What other things do you
need to be independent?

Any urinary or bowel supplies,

wound care supplies, gloves and wipes.

If you have communication needs,

your ASL needs or a communication device,

plain language, large print, braille.

So, things to be added in your information

if you need any of this.

And if your communication plan,

you're unable to communicate
during a disaster,

think through how will
you engage with others.

Do you need a communication board?

And if so, we sit on your go bag.

Does your support network know

how to reach you if the power is out?

If there's no communication,
what will be the plan?

Will it be a neighbor?

Will it be a friend that
lives a few minutes away?

And also, having paper and pen can help.

Putting reminders on
checking on your supplies.

As I mentioned earlier, doing frequently,

perhaps every six months.

And in there, you can have
different clothes as well

for the different types of weather.

So, we perhaps do this
at the start of winter,

at the start of summer,

and keep your kits in a cool, dry space

out of direct sun light.

A question for you,

how will you communicate
with your friends or family

that can help you in the disaster?

Anybody have thought this through yet?

And if not, that's okay.

If this is the time

and afterwards to start
thinking about this

and communicating with your
support network on how will you.

This is the part of the planning.

What other things are you
thinking about putting

in your emergency kits
that we didn't go over?

- After the Helena,

one of the things that I have a small kit

or one of the things
that didn't have in it

that they have now are
wipes that have soap,

that have soap in it or something.

And I mean, it's an extra expense,

but it can come in really handy.

I did share with a couple of people.

But the thing is I saw
them in the shelters

where they had supplies stopped

and that's when I discovered
it for the first time.

So, just to say that that
is indeed convenient,

something that have to be in your kit.

- Yes. I wanna piggyback on
what Carolyn was talking about.

Thank you.

Yes, I wanna piggyback on what Carolyn

was just talking about.

The wipes, I found those to be very handy

going through the
situation that we were in

when the water supply
was not as it should be

and can't wash them.

And since then, I've
bought the regular wipes

and then also the flushable wipes.

They come in real handy,

using those on a day-to-day basis now.

- Yes.
- They're so good.

And the other thing that I was
wanting to mention also was

also check your battery supply.

So, a lot of times you
need those batteries

in your flashlights or
whatever you have 'em in

and they'll corrode in there.

And always just take a little check

and see what your batteries
are good and buy new ones.

You know, replace those
ones that you have,

but make sure you have
enough for the units

or whatever you wanna put 'em in.

- I also wanted to mention, not only...

We mentioned service animals,

but also the other furry
kind of companions.

A lot of that, especially
with the supplies

and not getting able to get
supplies, even the farm animal,

having even, you know, having
hay and stuff for, you know,

them types of animals or reptiles

or whatever you have in your possession.

And also, piggyback on Carolyn
as well about the wipes,

with a lot of stuff is you
couldn't get cleaning supplies.

And after a disaster, not only
your water supply is nasty,

but having Clorox on
hand just to keep safe

because toilets were backing
up and stuff like that.

So, Clorox wipes or, you know, bleach

or stuff like that needs to
be kept on hand, I believe,

because with the bacteria
and the toxins and, you know,

even when the water
supply here in Asheville

was completely washed out in areas

and it was months before they got water.

You know, they needed to keep stuff

because water had seeped in

and it had washed through

when it was this very toxic environment.

- This is German. All great points.

Thank you all. And about
the batteries, right?

Not only flashlight, batteries,

if we have hearing aids,

considering if we need additional
extra batteries for them

and how to acquire them and store them,

all important points.

Thank you, everyone.

So, getting ready to shelter in place.

- Hold on just a minute.
Gary's got something.

- Go ahead.

- I'm Gary Ray.

I would be the best-looking blind man

any of you will ever see.

That's my description.

I think there's two
things that were critical

about the Helene problem.

First was the destruction
of our water delivery system

when the most important thing
that you're thinking about is,

"Okay, where am I going
to get water to drink?

And where am I going
to get water to flush?"

That can change your point of view

from being in a modern world
to being into stone age.

Now, I don't know.

You know, I generally say
that I know what's going on,

but I can't tell if what we have done

to protect the city's water system.

I don't know if we had another storm

like Helene get us in this coming fall

whether or not our water
system is going to be safe.

That was, it was just going
somewhere to find some water

to put in the bathtub to flush the toilet.

I mean, when that's the
biggest part of your day,

your world has certainly changed.

Now, the good thing, and
this happened because...

one of our local TV radio station groups,

they all got trapped in their studios.

And so, if you had an AM/FM radio,

they will serve as a clearing space.

When I say that,

what happened with me and my wife

was we were listening
to WWNC all the time.

We'd burned through batteries.
That's another thing.

We had enough batteries on hand,

so that we constantly
ran the batteries out

and threw 'em away and put new ones in.

But the information that,

the isolation that comes to everybody,

and it doesn't matter if you
have a disability or not,

if you don't know where there's gas,

you can't do anything.

And that radio station,
they were on 24 hours a day.

And that was the way so
many people in Asheville

found out what was going on.

It was a clearing space.

Now, one of the things that
I think is really important,

we need some place for
people with disability

to know where to go,

to find out what's out there.

And that, I mean, it's
great to have a go bag.

It's great to have all this stuff.

But not being able to find out,

because when a person with a disability

would go to one of these places

where water was supposed
to be, you were sunk

because there was nobody
there who knew anything about.

And so, you'd be standing around

and they did not know
how to deal with you.

So, having a...

And I don't know if this is even possible.

I would love to see
disability partners be the hub

in Asheville and or Buncombe County

about services for
people with disabilities

during disaster planning,
during disasters.

But the disability partners
was like everybody else.

You know, the power was out at our house

in North Asheville for seven days.

I don't know how long
the power was out here.

Nobody had any kind of communication

until they started bringing Starlink in

the first of the week after the storm.

So, it was just...

And it's...

We all have some experience right now

of what to do with storms,

but you know, that was the
worst storm in a hundred years.

We've got a pretty good idea
of how to deal with that

if we get hit again the fall of this year.

But what are we going to do
8, 10, 20 years from now?

You know, we're pretty prepared now,

but we need to come up
with some kind of a system

that would allow us to know what to do.

I mean, there was, so another
thing that I've heard a lot

of discussion about is, okay,

what we need is a list of
people with disabilities,

so the police can check on them.

Well, you know, we are here in America.

You know, we're kind of a,

we don't wanna be on anybody's list.

You don't need to know where our guns are.

You don't need to know where we are.

But when a disability,
when disability hits,

things change.

Things change. Now, I was extremely lucky

I lived with a sighted woman.

But I can just imagine what
it would've been like for me

to have been sitting
out in North Asheville

with nobody there to help me.

So, I'm so pleased of
what we're doing today

because this is stuff
we don't think about.

But one thing that I've heard
people kind of allude to

is we need to figure out
a way to keep this real.

And, you know, maybe looking at a,

something every year or so to go in

and go through the list

because our world is changing.

The weather is out to get us now.

Who would've ever thought

that we would've had a
hurricane in Asheville?

My daddy would, you know, that was what?

Well, you're up in the hills

and, you know, we don't
get hurricanes up here.

Well, we got one 10 million cubic yards.

I mean, it was destruction
of a cataclysmic.

And we're slowly, I mean,
we're seven months out.

I think we're doing pretty good,

but we need to think about the future.

We need to think about
a way to keep it real

because the next time
one of these things hit,

I imagine everybody in this
room will be dead, long dead.

What can we set up?

What can we set up so that
when something comes again,

we're a little bit better prepared?

Because it was just the most
amazing thing in the world

to sit there and there
was nothing going on.

But I'm coming down off my soapbox now.

I don't know whether this fits

into any of the things we've talked about,

but I wanted to, I wanted to say my piece.

Like, did y'all want me to sing?

You know, no? Nobody
wants me to sing. Okay.

I won't sing. I promise.
- We don't have a mic.

- Thank you.
- Give me the mic, blind boy.

- Maybe for a closing.

No, thank you for all your
thoughts. Very important.

Just a couple quick reflections
around the radio station,

that's great that you
were able to identify it

and not necessarily to you,

but an advocacy action for the community

could be engaging the radio station now.

Thanking them for that work
on keeping you all so informed

and developing a relationship
on who you do this.

Do you plan to do it again?

Can you include concepts
for people with disabilities

and this is what it looks like?

How can we, maybe they
were sending out catalog,

you know, curated material
that they were going over.

So, that's one area that engaging
that would encourage folks

or the cell to engage the
radio station around there.

Being a disability focused disaster hub,

I won't speak for Eva and her colleagues,

but whoever decides to do this

or even how should this
go about is a conversation

that we encourage folks to have

with your county emergency
management office

and their website has contact information.

During the disaster,

we were engaging them
to get services to folks

that are calling our hotline.

So, they are responsive.

And now, before another is
the time to engage them on,

how are you gonna support
the disability community?

And here are some community partners

that they could support.

For example, in Florida,

this is just for independent living.

All 18 of them have been
listed as mass care partners

of emergency management.

So, when a disaster
happens, they communicate

and they are granted gas cards.

So, from the government gas pump,

they can get that gas and do their work

in case there are communities

that are restricted to
transportation, right.

Like, you cannot go into some areas,

having those passes to go in

for sales staff and for
attendance sometimes.

Being able to communicate with
emergency management during,

but you have to prepare
that ahead of time.

And then there was one last point.

It'll come back to me,

but I think I saw another
speaker wanted to share.

- Yes, we have a couple more questions.

Well, this is just related to things

that I might put in the kit.

I don't think anyone
mentioned like a camp stove,

a way to cook, propane.

I know, during Helene, that
really became beneficial for me.

Also, it's a good idea

to make sure emergency kit is waterproof.

Like a $5 bucket with a lid is a good way

to ensure your supplies stay safe and dry.

- Yes. I have a quick question.

I was in a long-term
recovery group meeting

several weeks ago,

and a woman who is an expert on ham radios

in Western North Carolina mentioned

that she thought that
there is a way ham radios

could have captioning in it.

Are you familiar?

I mean, I can't visualize
how that would happen,

but is that something
that you are aware of?

- No, that's, I had not heard of that.

I do have some great friends

that are in the ham radio field.

I'll get some answer through
Eva on this question.

Thank you.

- I don't need this microphone.

I'll just hold it so no
one else will grab it.

- You do need it. It's an accommodation.

- Okay. Is it on? Okay, couple things.

My power was off for 13 days.

Lost all the food, the emergency,

some people got it in 72 hours

when I hadn't gotten it in 10 weeks.

I called the congressman's office way when

because it became a congressional
issue at that point.

It was, in my account,
on the following day.

So, that's a resource we had.

I was directed to drive
through standing water.

It was three, four feet chest deep.

And the maintenance went
in with waders and shovels

and rakes and cleared it.

The water drained to...

They thought 10 inches to foot.

I was directed by APD to drive through it.

It turned out to be closer to
two feet, 20 inches, two feet.

Blew the storm guard or skin plate

or snow guard, depending on
where you're from, from under.

My motor never ran right.

And I immediately applied
for disaster relief.

They said, "Well, your car still drives."

I didn't apply for a new car.

Just after five months
of three weeks into it,

I applied promptly.

The congressman's office could not,

after my being denied twice

for the vehicle support
mechanical repairs of $740,

they could not do anymore
because FEMA had closed.

In essence, my case referred me

to the American Bar
Association for god's sake

that spun me to Legal Aid of
North Carolina who took my case

because both denials were inappropriate.

And after five months
and the doggone lawyer,

I finally, supposedly it was approved.

So, I wonder with FEMA on
the brink of maybe a shutdown

and it being spun off to
the states like education,

and I won't get on Gary's soapbox.

But just as they're cutting
the national education, NEA,

and flipping it back to the
states, some states will excel

and some will drop the ball.

And I fear the same will be
true with the disaster relief

if there's no longer a FEMA,

even though I obviously
have my issues with FEMA.

if there's not some national oversight,

oh, what are we gonna do?

Can this building partners, for instance,

be a liaison, a conduit that
will get us proper help?

And of that, in essence, is my question,

what do we do when it hits the fan

if what marginal support
we have has been removed?

Thank you.

- This is the time to do
personal preparedness.

Engage with your communities

and your county emergency
management agency

to get a feeling, a perspective

of how engaged they will
be to support your needs.

There is no clear answer.

We don't know exactly where
the dominoes will fall

with FEMA, if you will.

And it's not only an
individual problem, but right.

And so, do wanna share,
right, your issues with FEMA.

FEMA appeals. It's a common theme.

Glad that you were able to
get help through legal aid

and through your
congressperson the first time,

not fully the second time.

And overall, something that I think

is also the resources, disability rights.

North Carolina traditionally also helps

with FEMA appeals and this process.

But what to do in case there's no FEMA?

We are, nationwide,
wondering how that will be.

And individually, it's
building our networks starting

to prepare as if no one's
coming for some time.

And as soon as we have
something more concrete,

it is something that also The Partnership

will be sharing widely.

And we'll make sure Eva
has any clear learnings

about what's what as we find out.

Right now, there is a FEMA
review council reviewing FEMA

and its future.

There is an open comment period right now.

I'll share with Eva following this,

talking points and where
to submit your comments.

They are due May 15th and...

No one, I don't think anyone
is saying FEMA was perfect.

You know, so far from.

But having no FEMA,

as you say, some states
will do better than others,

but as we have multi-state disasters...

Milton didn't go into your area,

but it happened two weeks later

and resources had to be moved around.

And if we have wildfires,
multiple hurricanes,

extreme heat in other areas,
this thing set the support.

And without a FEMA to be able
to have a overarching support

that we are fearing the worst.

And that's why we need to prepare.

Because when the worst happens,

disabled people are always hit worse.

And to the first point,

to the first comment around,
the previous speaker,

around what to do 20 years from now,

how will we be preparing for them?

And Asheville does have a,

the city of Asheville has
a sustainability department

and they are the ones thinking

and planning on what to do far ahead.

I'd encourage you to engage them

if that's of interest of you.

I'm gonna keep us moving for time's sake.

But there will be more times
for questions and reflections.

Talking about getting
ready to shelter in place.

When we say "shelter in place,"

we mean staying where you are

during a disaster or emergency.

That could be at home.

It could be at disability partners, right?

It could be your place of, you know,

where you practice your faith.

It could be wherever
you are at that moment.

And that's why where you
spend a lot of time in,

and if you can, ask, having
the conversations around,

what is the plan if we
have to shelter in place

or evacuate is important.

When you're shelter in place,

follow the instructions
from local authorities.

They will share what the
hazard is thought to be

and how to do some
mitigation including like,

oh, should I pull out
the plastic sheeting?

And when you're sheltering
in place, this could happen.

You know, could happen
because of a winter storm.

It could be due to extreme heat or cold

and you're encouraged to stay in.

If you have power, not they
would ask you to, right,

go where you're safest.

Couple things to think about is,

where are some places you go a lot?

And there, what to do,

what does their shelter
in place plans look like?

I had a question here.

Just checking if there's any, like,

sheltering in place reflections.

- NOAA, the National...

We may not even have weather
reports available to us.

We've cut the budget there.

We no longer, they're shutting
her down in Asheville,

which is one of three in the nation.

Very, very important.

We won't really know yet weather reports

in the way we have in the past,

but reliably and promptly.

But now, if they've already
shut down NOAA, and so-

- They haven't actually shut it down.

- Okay, well they're
considering it. It's scary.

Those good television and radio companies

that try to keep us informed,

they won't have a source of information

if that gets shut down.

So, how do we plan for
that? Go out and see?

- I don't know if anyone's
here is the meteorologist.

So, here's a couple things,
right? Just to be sure, right?

We're talking about an arm of NOAA,

the National Weather Service, right?

'Cause NOAA does many things.

NOAA, the National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration.

So, the National Weather Service for now

and I was just on a webinar
yesterday literally.

For this hurricane season,

they expect to be able to
provide us the information

and us, all of us, right?

To the weather station, to
the TV stations, all of us

for this hurricane season.

They expect that they
should be able to do that.

For the National Weather Service,

there has been a number of cutbacks.

They are doing somewhat less the,

the weather balloons
instead of twice a day.

They've gone down to once a day

and they don't know yet
how long they'll be able

to do it every six hours
during an active hurricane.

But for now, we do have,

we expect to have the National
Weather Service information.

We are, at The Partnership,

one of our partners is
a meteorologist for Yale

and we've asked him, his name is...

his last name is Masters, Dr. Masters,

to keep us informed the
moment that he hears

that National Weather
Service is gonna be cut

and we need to, we would
do a massive communication

to all our partners, disability
community specifically,

on where would that resource be because...

Too many things depend

on the National Weather
Service advisories.

Private business like commerce,

like so many things that
someone would pick it up

for it to be private.

It's a very tall order
from understandings.

But it is something that for,

at least for right now, we have.

And if there's a moment that we don't,

we will do a mass communication

and at least some mitigation or what,

where to get information from.

Other thoughts?

And then finishing with evacuation.

You know, leave where you are

when you're not safe in that area.

In times, you may need to evacuate.

Wildfire, flooding,

potentially power outages,

and what to take with you right?

We've just a quick
reminder to your go bag.

Consider things like
power equipment, chargers,

consumable medical supplies,

any communication devices or backups,

fidget devices, if that helps you,

a change of clothes,
three bottles of water,

just enough to get you moving.

Places you could evacuate from.

Maybe home, work, class,
friends and family.

And as we mentioned,

like having conversations with them

about what does the plan look like.

And in these conversations certainly,

what are the accessible ways to leave

and what are the accessible
evacuation instructions

so that we all are informed?

And...

Just recently, right?

Our friend here mentioned
we don't like lists.

We don't like lists.

We don't like registries,

especially quote, unquote,
special registries

or special needs registries.

There are some programs like Smart911

that anyone can put information there

for emergency responders

to be able to look at your information.

But this is more used on
every day minor emergencies.

On a large scale disaster,

so many things are happening
that there may not be time

or communication access
to reach that information.

And we move, we relocate, right?

We may go to friends or family.

We may be at a neighbor's,
go to a shelter,

places of worship.

And the registries, the
list don't account for this.

Florida is the only state
that has, by statute,

special needs shelter and
an accompanying registry.

And all the advocates there,

that disability organizations
are looking for ways

to end that 'cause it's
not a best practice.

It's not updated every year,
right? There are always gaps.

Texas is the old,

the other state that has
a mandated by state law

a special needs registry.

And again, we've worked with
county emergency managers

and they're like, "We
have to use it, like.

But when the disaster happens,

we're not opening it up," right?

So, again, I encourage you also

to discourage any type of
listing because they don't work.

They are too costly.

And when the disaster
happens and it's needed,

there's no way for it to be
having an active communication

for where you are moving
because the power's out,

because the communications
are down and so on.

And when you're discussing, right,

and planning for how you will evacuate,

consider, will you be at,

do you have a car?

And if not, how will you
transport, you know, far distance?

Do you know your evacuation routes?

And will you go to friends
or will friends pick you up?

Or family? Will you be
dependent on public bus?

And what does that look
like? Or paratransit?

And we know paratransit should
not be relied on to evacuate.

So, oftentimes, you need a day

or multiple day ahead schedule.

That doesn't account for
immediate evacuation.

Any questions as we're nearing the end

of our presentation today?

Or reflections?

- I'd like, whoop.

I'd like to add something.
- Please.

- And I'm getting in front of someone

who needs to hear what I'm saying.

Can you hear me?

If you are someone who
does not use technology,

making friends with a neighbor

so that they can come and tell you

if something bad is happening

and how to proceed, that
would be a good idea.

Just say it.

And then maybe if you are someone

who doesn't use technology
and you do evacuate,

leave a note on your door

so that that neighbor isn't
then worrying about you.

Yeah.

- Amen.

- That's a great point.

In creating your network of support,

your neighbor will be
your first responder.

And having relationships,

conversations ahead of time is critical.

And not just one, but right
around you if possible.

And not only for them to check on you,

but also what you bring
to the table, right?

You have signed up to
all the emergency alerts

that we shared here.

You are planning and
talking to your friends

and you perhaps were
able to store, you know.

Some of us who get
consumable medical supplies

end up with more than we need sometimes.

So, identifying what to bring also

and bringing that to the conversation.

Like, this is what I'm doing.
This is how I can help you.

It would be great if you can do this.

And everyone having
responsibilities and codependence.

It's critical for our
survival. Great point.

Thank you for adding.

Anyone else?

Go ahead.

- I would just like to
bring one other thing

to everyone's attention
because public transit,

transportation is doing what it can do

to get the roads open.

And we've recently got the
Swannanoa River Road back open

to get transit through there.

And we're working on getting new buses

and we're still trying,

we're going through a COA presently

as a big analysis that another
firm is coming in doing

for the city of Asheville.

And that's gonna take another
year just to complete.

But yet still we're getting
people from one place

to the other.

And being the other place,

we are trying to get
a trans transportation

to get people from the
airport in a better way.

But still, we having problems in the road.

And where there's a busy
road, you have to expand it,

get the buses to and from

destination to destination
to make it quicker.

But you can't make it quicker
if you don't expand the roads.

And then the last point
I'd like touch on is

there's no viable way out of Asheville.

The bus system does not,
Greyhound does not operate

out of Asheville for
the last seven months.

There's no plans for it.

Greyhound has come back
in that I've heard of.

But airplane's the only
way out of Asheville

if you don't have a car

and would be nice to get
the Greyhound bus system

back on line.

And it's a good thing and
another way for people to meet,

but I'd just like to bring that up.

Thank you.
- Amen.

- Thank you for sharing. And sometimes,

our community decides to, if possible,

to evacuate much earlier
and get out of harm's way

and as a...

I don't wanna say a target,

but someone to advocate
for Greyhound coming back

is through your mayor's office,

and perhaps, as our
earlier colleague shared,

your elected officials at the local level

and going upwards from that.

And you sound like you have the argument

and the advocacy point.

So, those could be some
avenues to explore it with.

And sometimes, the plan
is to evacuate early.

That now, that...

If the National Weather Service continues

to provide us good, you
know, forecast information

that we, that they say, you know, again.

Helene was known to go into the Carolinas,

at least the path, well ahead of time.

But no one has planned for this
type of wind damage and rain

to happen in Asheville
and the surrounding area.

Right? It was considered a climate haven.

And the National Weather
Service is predicting

that hurricanes will continue
to have quick speed, right?

Which is what meant or made
Helene have so strong power

by the time it got so deep inland.

So, these are things that we
need to continue planning for.

Any other questions or
reflections from anyone?

And this has all been great. Thank you.

- I wanna remind everybody, so.

(mumbles)

- Well, you remind everybody
and we'll let them finish up

because the food's been
sitting out there, so.

- I'd like to remind everyone.

I'd like to remind everyone

that it is just a few months from now,

hurricane season will be back.

- Hurricane season
starts on June 1st. Yes.

- Thank you.

- Thank you all.
- We're not done yet.

Let's let him finish up.

Okay.
- Just a couple quick things.

We will, as Eva shared, we will,

you will have a preparedness checklist

that will go over the disability rights

during disasters overview
that I shared earlier,

staying informed resources,
emergency kit checklist,

disability preparedness checklist,
and your planning guide.

A number of resources I
mentioned around wireless alerts,

where to find accessible,
where to find open shelters.

They should be accessible.

Resources from ready.gov
and poison control.

We have a disability disaster hotline.

We helped hundreds of folks
in your area during this

and still get calls from the area.

The resource for Red Cross. Don't forget.

If you don't have a fire alarm,
carbon monoxide detector,

this is the time that they can come in

and install it for free.

Your 211 and United Way links

for your area in the southeast ADA center.

From our website, we have
additional disaster tips

and the preparedness
checklist that you'll get.

This is the link to it here at the bottom.

And thank you all.

Thank you, disability
partners, for inviting us

to speak with you all today.

- We really appreciate you too very much.

You guys have been
extremely busy this year.

Think about all the things going on.

So, thank you so much
and we appreciate it.