# Emergency Preparedness:
## What tools do we need in case of an emergency evacuation?

1) **Rope rings** - during evacuations, instruct every child (that's able) to hold on to the rope ring. This helps volunteers lead the children and keeps everyone together in an organized fashion. With the rope ring, it's also easier to have one adult assisting 2 children if necessary, freeing up other volunteers to help the children that may be having a more difficult time.

2) **Backpack harnesses** - keep 2-3 harnesses with your emergency evacuation kit. These are helpful for the students who are an elopement risk. There are kid-friendly harnesses such as the popular monkey backpacks, but Amazon also has harnesses that come in larger sizes for bigger students. The children should still be encouraged to hold on to the rope ring, but the harness provides a little extra precaution in case they do try to run.

3) **Wheelchairs** - for the older/larger students who may refuse to walk or who are at risk for seizures, keep 1-2 basic wheelchairs on hand.

4) **Sensory /emergency bag** - be sure you have an emergency sensory kit ready to grab-and-go. We recommend including noise cancelling headphones, koosh balls, thera putty, chew tubes, and a soft comfort item such as a stuffed animal. Non-perishable snacks are also helpful to keep in the bag, as well as a roll of brightly colored tape that helps create visible boundaries for the kids once they are moved to the 'waiting area'. \

5) Well, maybe it won't guarantee things will go *perfectly* during an emergency, but certainly your most important line of defense is to **PRACTICE**! If the children are familiar with the emergency drill, the anxiety levels will decrease immensely and children will make the transition much more easily during an emergency. Practice also helps volunteers feel confident and stay calm in an emergency situation. (If the adults are anxious, chances are the kids will pick up on that!) Get your church's safety team involved in practicing your evacuation drill quarterly!

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