The hurricanes that recently hit our country have stirred up a lot of conversations among the AAC community regarding the importance of helping people with disabilities be prepared in an emergency situation. Although experiencing hurricanes in Connecticut may not be a significant concern, being prepared in other types of natural and common disasters should be a priority.

Think about the role that communication plays in medical emergencies, weather-related catastrophes, car accidents, fires, and more. AAC users have the need and the right to communicate in these scary and potentially traumatic situations. Consider these points for ensuring successful communication during these highly stressful, times.

✓ Teams, caregivers, and AAC users may want to customize preprogrammed phrases into a device in order for that user to quickly explain who he/she is, list medical concerns, relay caregiver contact information, etc. These messages can be helpful in explaining critical details about the individual to an emergency response team.

✓ Review the AAC user’s existing pagesets to check for specific vocabulary that may be relevant to emergency situations. As appropriate, add important words for the user to access. Consider vocabulary that an individual can use to ask for help, describe pain, explain what happened, etc.

✓ Having a low-tech version of a high-tech AAC device can be an important way for a user to access communication if his/her device becomes damaged or unusable, such as following an extended power outage. A backup communication board should always be readily available. Taking screenshots on tablet devices can be an easy way to create a low-tech board of familiar pagesets.

✓ Teaching the AAC user how to find and use the phrases, vocabulary, pagesets, and low-tech boards now is important so that he/she understands what to do with them in the event that an emergency situation does arise. The AAC user cannot be expected to just naturally know what to do with these new tools, and oftentimes direct instruction on using them may be necessary!

Check out the following resources for additional ideas and considerations:

- [http://praacticalaac.org/praactical/emergency-preparedness-for-the-aac-family/](http://praacticalaac.org/praactical/emergency-preparedness-for-the-aac-family/)
- [http://blog.mycoughdrop.com/communication-in-an-emergency/?ref=tw](http://blog.mycoughdrop.com/communication-in-an-emergency/?ref=tw)
- Create an emergency profile with Ready by recovers - [https://ready.recovers.org/](https://ready.recovers.org/)