Emergency Communication 4 ALL
Communicating During Times of Emergency

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Natural and Man-Made Disasters
• Many natural and man-made disasters
  • Fires, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons, tsunamis
  • Terrorist bombs, explosives
  • Health threats- anthrax

The Problem
• People with disabilities in the US often overlooked
  – Planning
  – Implementation of emergency strategies

• Despite
  – Vulnerability
  – Population size
  – ADA and Sec 504 of the Rehab Act

Importance of Communication
• Effective and efficient communication needed
  – Prior to, during, and after emergencies
• Problem for people with CCN
• Millions of individuals with CCN worldwide cannot rely on their spoken during times of emergencies
• AAC approaches - picture and symbol communication boards and electronic devices are available to help people express themselves, BUT do they have the needed vocabulary
Vocabulary and Symbols: Adequate for Communication in Times of Emergency?

- **Question:** Are vocabulary and specially designed symbols available on these communication boards and speech-generating devices (SGD) adequate for effective communication during times of emergency?

- **Goals:**
  1. To identify the vocabulary needed by persons with significant disabilities who have CCN when communicating during times of emergencies;
  2. To determine the degree to which this vocabulary was already available in two commonly-used symbol systems;
  3. To develop and make available evidence-based, free, downloadable picture-based and text-based emergency communication aids that can be used before, during, and after emergencies

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**METHOD**

- 2 online focus groups were established
  - 1 for individuals who use AAC who have had experience dealing with emergency situations (n = 9)
  - 1 for emergency management personnel (n = 8)
- Each focus group independently generated needed vocabulary for communicating during times of emergency (2 weeks)
- 2 lists combined into 1 unduplicated list and then simultaneously sent to the 2 focus groups for final review
- Discrepancy analysis conducted - comprehensive list
- Online focus groups prioritized 50 words

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**RESULTS**

- 209 unique words considered to be necessary for communicating during times of emergency were generated
  - 76% by the icon sequences contained in Unity 128
  - 79% of the PCS symbols
- Words missing: Attendant, Chemical (s), Damage, Disaster, Evacuate, Flood, Generator, Hazard, Incident, Infection, Injury/Injured, Liquid, Memory, Mudslide, Panic, Patient/Passenger, Persistent, Shelter/Sheltering, Shoot/Shooting/Shot, Stress, Suspect

- Full list of emergency vocabulary can be found and downloaded at http://www.disabilities.temple.edu/aacvocabulary/EMERGENCY.shtml
RESULTS (continued)

• Needed vocabulary available for developers and manufacturers of speech generating devices and fabricated communication boards

• Evidence-based, downloadable communication aids available:
  
  Emergency Communication 4 ALL

• [Link]

http://disabilities.temple.edu/aacvocabulary/e4all.shtml
DISCUSSION

- AAC systems have not adequately included vocabulary related to adolescent or adult roles such as:
  - Employment
  - College life
  - Healthy sexuality or abuse
  - Managing health care
  - Managing personal assistance services
  - Managing transportation, and now
  - Communicating in times of emergency
CONCLUSIONS

• Collaboration between individuals who use AAC approaches and emergency personnel is needed.

• Collaborations needed among researchers, developers, and manufacturers of SGD and other wireless information/communication technologies.

• Enhanced communication technologies have the potential for preventing emergency situations from becoming life-threatening disasters.

• The wireless technologies already exist, collaboration is needed!

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