

The summer may be winding down, but hurricane season sure isn't. Last month we learned how to identify and prepare your personal support network for any challenges you may face as a person with a disability during an emergency or disaster. Now it is time to prepare yourself so that you know what you will need and how you will be affected should a hurricane or tropical storm head your way. Completing a thorough personal assessment is a crucial step in disaster preparation because it gives you a chance to really consider all of your current needs and any potential changes to your needs that may be the result of a hurricane or other disaster. The key to successfully completing a personal assessment is to consider each aspect of your life, your current capabilities, and how these may be affected by a disaster. Areas to consider include aspects of daily living, getting around regularly, and evacuation procedures.

As you begin your personal assessment, you will want to ask yourself several questions about your needs and your capabilities. Some important things to consider include these:

- Do you use communication devices?
- Do you depend on accessible transportation to get to work, appointments, or to other places in your community?
- Do you received medical treatments (e.g. dialysis) on a regular basis?
- Do you need assistance with personal care?
- Do you rely on electrical equipment or other durable equipment?
- Do you use mobility aids such as a walker, cane, or a wheelchair?
- Do you have a service animal?

As you answer each question, you may find it helpful to write down or record your needs, including any equipment or supplies, and anything that requires assistance. For example, if you have a service animal, you will want to consider all of your animal's needs in addition to your own as you are making your plans and preparations. As another example, if you require assistance with transportation, you will want to formulate a clear plan with your support network to make sure that you can get where you need to be during a hurricane.

Carefully identifying all of your current needs and capabilities and how they may be altered in the event of a hurricane or other disaster will better prepare both you and your personal support network for any emergency situation that you may face.