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The content of articles contained in e-ACCESS solely reflect the personal opinions of the authors or contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position of NFPA

I never looked at it this way before!

By Allan B. Fraser, CBI, CPCA, Sr.
Building Code Specialist, NFPA

In 2010, 1,331,500 fires were reported in the US leading to ([Karter, 2011](#)):

- 3,120 civilian deaths,
- 17,720 civilian injuries, and
- \$11.6 billion damage

Of those, 482,000 were structure fires resulting in:

- 2,755 civilian deaths
- 15,420 civilian injuries, and
- \$9.7 billion damage.

According to incident reports filed by local fire departments, physical disability was a factor in an average of 380, or 14%, of home fire deaths per year between 2004 and 2008. Half of the victims were involved in ignition and were in the area of origin when the fire started. When physical disability contributed to the fatal injury, the victims were more likely to have been killed by a fire involving oxygen administration equipment or that started in the bedroom, or where mattresses or bedding was the item first ignited, than were home fire victims in general.

This fire death rate per million among people with disabilities is 1.6 times the rate for all home fires (assuming the 2005-2007 population with disabilities would be comparable to the population in 2004-2008). It is very likely that some victims with physical disabilities were missed during fire incident coding because those disabilities were not readily observable—that is there was no wheelchair or other device as evidence of disability.

It stands to reason that the true death rate for the physically disabled exceeds the general population death rate by an even larger margin. It is unclear whether fire victims with sensory disabilities were coded as having a physical disability as sensory disability was not mentioned specifically - (Evarts, 2011)

In a 2011 report entitled [“Emergency Evacuation Readiness of Full-Time Wheelchair Users with Spinal Cord Injury”](#), L. A. McClure et al. set out to “determine the percentage of full-time wheelchair users with spinal cord injuries who felt they could evacuate from various locations and the percentage who have a plan for evacuation. Study results will help clinicians and emergency officials

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understand needs related to evacuation preparedness.”

One of the researchers conclusions is that “a large discrepancy exists between the perception that one can evacuate and actually having a plan. The perception that one can evacuate without a plan or the use of assistive technology is an area of concern that must be further addressed by educators. Education must emphasize the need to have a defined evacuation plan and effective utilization of assistive technology.”

It is human nature to separate our own personal safety from things that we perceive will happen rarely in our lifetime. We think, “Oh that will never happen to me,” or “Hey, I know I can take care of myself if it does.” To quote the late Bill Scott, Abilities Unlimited founder and chair of NFPA’s Disability Access Review and Advisory Committee (DARAC) “All people, regardless of their circumstances, have some responsibility for their own safety.”



Bill Scott

With respect to fire and life safety for people with disabilities, we will all be a part of that group for some period in our lives. We all need to have and practice our own evacuation plans. It is a critical and possibly life saving exercise.

The NFPA reports states: “If the estimated number of victims was missing a larger share of people who actually had a physical disability than the American Community Survey’s estimate of the disabled population missed, as this logic would suggest, then the 15 deaths per million population would be an *underestimate*. It stands to reason that the true death rate for physically disabled exceeds the general population death rate by an even larger margin.”

I would argue that the 380 annual deaths of people reported to have had a disability might have been significantly reduced had pre-planned and regularly practiced emergency evacuation plans been in place. Using NFPA’s [Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities](#) to develop a viable plan and practicing it regularly empowers people with disabilities “to take some responsibility for their own safety.”

¹ McClure LA, B. M. (2011). *Emergency evacuation readiness of full-time wheelchair users with spinal cord injury*. Arch Phys Med Rehabil 2011;92:491-8.

[2011 NFPA® Life Safety Webinars Week](#) [\(December 12-16\)](#)



Get more top-notch instruction for less with [NFPA®'s Life Safety Webinars Week](#). Save 50% on five 90-minute "live" learning opportunities that boost expertise and performance!

e-ACCESS readers take particular note of [Day 5: Friday, 12/16/11 \(12:30 - 2:00 p.m. ET\) -- NFPA's Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities Webinar](#).

Learn to prepare and practice a personal emergency evacuation plan for people with disabilities involving mobility, visual, hearing, speech, and cognitive impairments
[Click here to register!](#)

President Obama Appoints Christopher Stephen Hart to the Board



President Barack Obama has named Christopher Stephen Hart of Boston to the U.S. Access Board. Hart is the Director of Urban and Transportation Projects for the Institute for Human Centered Design, an international nonprofit organization in Boston that promotes accessibility and universal design. He also serves as an appointed member of the Governor's Transportation Advisory Reform Committee and the National Steering Committee for Project ACTION, a national organization dedicated to promoting universal access to transportation for people with disabilities.



Chris with NFPA staffers Ken Willette and Joe Mollis.

In addition, Hart served as a consultant on transportation issues for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and Boston's disability community and is a board member for the Livable Streets Alliance and the Disability Law Center. Hart succeeds Access Board Member Ronald J. Gardner of Bountiful, Utah.



NFPA had the privilege of having Chris, along with volunteers Betty King and John Kane all of whom have mobility functional needs, participate in our successful staff training program for emergency stair descent devices on December 3, 2010 at NFPA headquarters in Quincy, Massachusetts. We applaud the President's appointment as Chris is not only a tireless advocate for those with functional needs but a true leader in showing us all how to get involved.



Don't Miss the NFPA® Fire & Life Safety Conference!

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NFPA® FIRE & LIFE SAFETY CONFERENCE
DECEMBER 12-14, 2011 • ORLANDO, FL

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NFPA Participates in International Dialogue on Accessibility.



From November 7 through 10, 2011, the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Mission to the European Union sponsored a group of visitors from the European Commission and the Ontario

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Accessibility Directorate in Washington, DC to learn more from United States government agencies and others about our experiences in the United States about developing and applying accessibility requirements for the built environment as well American information and communications technology. On November 8th they hosted a full day, public event in the Access Board’s conference room which included representatives from the European Commission, the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, several federal agencies, NFPA and ICC from the private sector standards setting organizations.

The first panel of speakers was internationally based and included:

- Ellen Waxman, assistant deputy minister of the Ministry of Community & Social Services at the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario who talked about the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation](#) and the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act of 2005](#)
- Inmaculada (Ima) Placencia-Porrero, European Commission Directorate-General Justice who talked about [Mandate 376, “Accessibility Requirements for Public Procurement of Products and Services in the ICT Domain”](#) and [Mandate 420, “Standardisation Mandate to CEN, CENELEC and ETSI in Support of European Accessibility Requirements for Public Procurement in the Built Environment”](#). Mandates are the mechanism by which the Commission requests the European Standards Organizations to develop and adopt European standards in support of European policies and legislation ([click here for more information](#)).



The second panel included:

- Eve Hill, senior attorney with the US Department of Justice (DOJ)
- Karen Reltz Stauss of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
- Richard Devylder senior advisor at the US Department of Transportation. (DOT)



Richard Devylder

The last panel included:

- Kim Paarlberg of the International Code Council (ICC)
- Allan Fraser of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)

This exciting and successful event was attended by some 75 people.



Senior Building Code

Specialist Allan B. Fraser, CBI, CPCA, represented NFPA and outlined NFPA’s activities in support of fire and life safety for people with disabilities.





Update on RESNA's Groundbreaking New Standard

RESNA is developing the first ANSI accredited standard for *Emergency Stair Travel Devices Used by Individuals with Disabilities*. The committee, chaired by Glenn Hedman, MS, director of the Assistive Technology Unit at the University of Illinois at Chicago's College of Applied Health Sciences has worked on the standard for a little over a year and expects it to be published in the next 12 to 18 months.



This standard covers the design, performance, description, inspection, and maintenance of devices whose primary purpose is the travel of individuals using stairs during building evacuations. It does not cover devices whose primary purpose is the travel of individuals with disabilities during routine travel using stairs. Devices not covered include, but are not limited to inclined platform lifts, stairway chairlifts, wheelchair carriers, stair-climbing or stair-descending wheelchairs, wheelchair attachments that assist in climbing or descending stairs, hospital transport equipment, equipment for the transport of individuals with acute injuries.

Committee members include representatives of the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), code development and enforcement entities, consultants, researchers, consumers, insurance industry representatives, manufacturers, suppliers, testing organizations, facilities managers, and general interest groups..



The committee has established the standard's outline as follows:

- Purpose
- Scope
- Characteristics of Devices
 - Device Description
 - Occupant Features
 - Operator Features
- Performance
- Markings
- Testing
- Inspection



Once the standard is completed, proposals will be submitted to various model code committees to include the standard as a mandatory reference along with scoping proposals for the number of devices in certain buildings along with the locations where the devices should be stored. This exciting project that will provide significantly increased ability of those with mobility functional needs to quickly and safely evacuate multistory buildings.

First Responder Assistance for the Whole Community

By Chris Littlewood, St. Petersburg College, Center for Public Safety Innovation, National Terrorism Preparedness Institute



Chris Littlewood

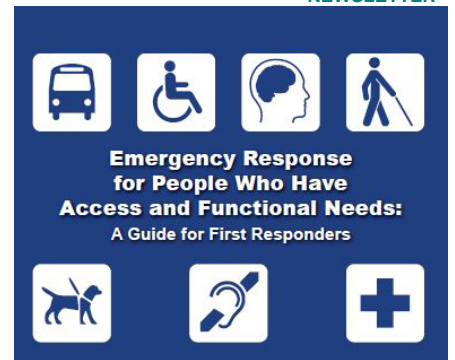
All emergency situations are stressful and everyone involved is NOT likely to be as prepared as he or she could be. This includes first responders.

Many first responders think they have what they need to help people with access and functional needs formerly known as “special needs who may require additional assistance before, during and after and emergency. In many cases, however, first responders simply do not have the knowledge or training to they need

provide the most appropriate assistance to those with unique access and functional needs.

One of the major reasons is that first responders may simply not be aware of the importance of training to assist people with access and functional needs until they are in the situation where they are faced with someone who has a specific access or functional need for the first time. When that happens, it’s too late for training.

So what’s the solution? Training for emergency response and recovery that includes people with access and functional needs is the answer. St. Petersburg College’s Center for Public Safety Innovation (CPSI) and [the National Terrorism Preparedness Institute \(NTPI\)](#) in partnership with the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR) are working to provide solutions that assist the whole community in the response and recovery phases of an emergency or disaster. CPSI/NTPI and SPAWAR have developed a flip book, to give emergency personnel a tool that can guide them in assisting people with access and functional needs during the response and recovery phase of an emergency. The book is called *Emergency Response for People Who Have Access and Functional Needs: A Guide for First Responders*.



The way an individual may appear or react in a situation may not be a clear indication of the individual’s abilities. This flip book provides a quick reference that allows first responders to evaluate the situation and the individual needing assistance and to understand people with access and functional needs (AFN). It gives many essential tips related to working with people with sensory, cognitive, or mobility disabilities, as well as those with language or cultural differences, children, seniors, people with transportation limitations, people with medical needs, and people in institutions or congregate care facilities.



The book also provides key points about assisting the individual with specific disabilities or needs. For example:

- Cognitive AFN - A person making sudden repetitive movements may have an AFN, but he or she is not necessarily a threat to others or himself or herself
- Blind or Low Vision AFN - Don’t touch a person’s cane.
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing AFN- Hearing aids do not guarantee that the person can hear and understand speech.
- Medical AFN- An individual’s medical needs may be as simple as taking daily medication.
- Avoid separating a person from his or her assistive device, be it a wheelchair, hearing aid or medical equipment.

The books contents are broken down into 12 categories of access and functional needs. An assessment strategies checklist is provided to help with individual assessment in each community. Finally, instructional videos provide additional information about helping the entire community that will help familiarize first responders with the various assistive devices that are available.

Limited quantities of the flip book are available in print, but all of the

content can be viewed, copied, and printed at: <http://terrorism.spcollege.edu> The videos will also be available on [St. Petersburg College’s, NTPI Website](http://St.PetersburgCollege’s.NTPIWebsite).

The flip book is not a replacement for training in emergency planning, preparedness, response and recovery. Rather, it is intended to provide additional information in useful format. All the information, including the videos, will be available online for free by the end of November 2011 at: <http://terrorism.spcollege.edu>.

Chris is a project coordinator with the Center for Public Safety Innovation and the National Terrorism Preparedness Institute at St. Petersburg College in Florida. He has been an adult educator for more than 15 year,s with an emphasis on technology and public safety. He believes in friendly advocacy and self advocacy for all people with varying special needs and disabilities. Since Chris has a moderate to severe hearing loss himself, he is always involved with the deaf, late-deaf, and hard of hearing communities at all levels. The importance of including every special needs group in emergency planning is profoundly important to Chris, who has developed curricula and facilitated courses for police officers, military personnel, government employees, and the public. His background includes interactive course design, including accessible training for special need populations and people with disabilities. Chris also has an extensive background in various civilian law enforcement roles.



NFPA’s Disability Access Review and Advisory Committee

DARAC held its most recent meeting at the new Westin Hotel in Phoenix, AZ on September 15 and 16, 2011 with 14 members and guests in attendance.



Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon, center, Susan Scott, right and Allan Fraser, NFPA staff, left.

The committee was welcomed to Phoenix by Mayor Phil Gordon on Thursday morning. Mayor Gordon knew former DARAC Chair Bill Scott when Bill and his company, Abilities Unlimited were the contract inspector for Phoenix’s major accessible public

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NEWSLETTER

ways project a few years ago. Bill passed away March 31, 2011 and will be missed by all who knew him. Mayor Gordon praised DARAC on their work and pledged his continued commitment to making Phoenix accessible for all.

The committee heard updates on numerous NFPA initiatives related to accessibility including e-ACCESS, "Guides" and related seminars, NFPA Journal, July/August 2010, Residential Sprinkler Initiative, NFPA 101/5000, Visitability, Elevators, 26th CSUN Conference on Technology & People with Disabilities, 2011 NFPA Conference & Expo, FEMA presentation, September – National Preparedness Month, December 2011 Orlando "Mini-Conference", RESNA and Fire Prevention Week – Oct. 9-15, 2010

Toby Olson, Executive Secretary, Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment, State of Washington was elected committee Chair and Steven Spinetto, former ADA Coordinator, Boston, MA was elected Vice Chair. The Chair appointed a subcommittee to review the bylaws to possibly formulate revisions.

The committee will meet next during NFPA's 2012 Conference & Expo in June, 2012.



FEMA

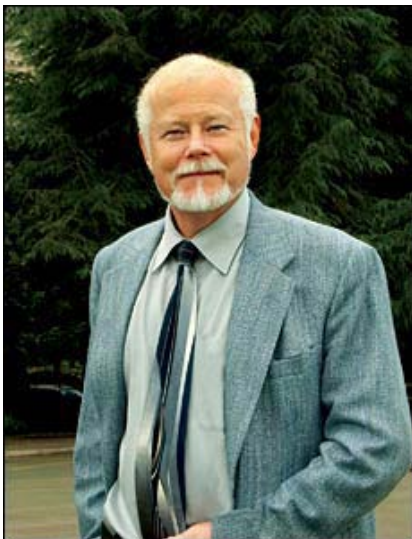
NFPA Congratulates Neil McDevitt on His Appointment to FEMA Staff!

Coordination's new Disability Communications Specialist.

Neil has a broad background and excellent experience. As a volunteer firefighter in suburban Philadelphia, he is one of a handful of emergency responders in the country who are also profoundly deaf. In addition to hands-on fire and rescue experience with the Fire Department of Montgomery Township, he has provided fire safety presentations to deaf children and adults and given non-verbal communication classes to firefighters, police officers and emergency medical technicians. Neil was originally involved with [Community Emergency Preparedness Information Network \(CEPIN\)](#) as a subject matter expert in developing the CEPIN course. At CEPIN, Neil was instrumental in having NFPA present sessions on its [Emergency Evacuation Guide for People with Disabilities](#) at several national conferences

Neil's involvement with NFPA goes back to his firefighting days. More recently, he has written several articles for e-ACCESS and was the subject of a feature article in the July/August issue of NFPA's member magazine, *NFPA Journal*, which focused "how NFPA is making life safer for more than 54 million Americans with disabilities."

Neil is a graduate of Gallaudet University and lives in Montgomery



Newly elected DARAC Chair, Toby Olson



On August 29, 2011 Neil McDevitt began in his new position at FEMA headquarters as the Office of Disability Integration and

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Township, Pennsylvania with his wife and two children.

NFPA congratulates Neil on his exciting new position and we look forward to working with him even more in the future.

Tennessee's Smoke Alarm Distribution Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

By: *Donicé R. Kaufman, director of Wellness and Education, [Bridges \(formerly League for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing\)](#)*



Traditional smoke alarms are inexpensive, effective, and alert you audibly. But what if you or your loved one can't hear it? According to [the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders \(NIDCD\)](#), 8% of all Americans suffered from some kind of hearing loss as of 1990, and it is believed that that number has increased to 15% in 2011. There is a need for accessible smoke alarms that

will alert people with functional hearing needs, in all states, cities, and neighborhoods.

In Tennessee, which the United States Fire Administration (USFA) says has the seventh highest death rate from fire, the [Emergency Awareness and Readiness Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(EARS\) coalition](#), the [Tennessee State Fire Marshal's office](#), and [Bridges \(formerly League for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing\)](#), recently conducted several fire safety workshops and disseminated [Lifetone](#) (vibrating) smoke alarms to persons in the community who are deaf and hard of hearing. *(Editor's note: Lifetone alarms are not a replacement for your current smoke alarm, but work in conjunction with it.)*

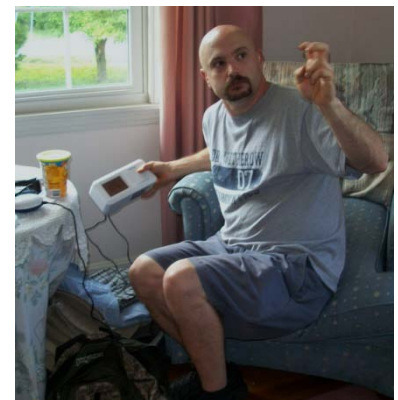


How did they do it? In August 2010, Bridges hosted the [Community Emergency Preparedness Information Network \(CEPIN\)](#) workshop on "Emergency Responders and the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Community: Taking

the First Steps Toward Disaster Preparedness, AWR-186," which is certified by the Department of Homeland Security. This workshop brought emergency planners and responders together with deaf and hard of hearing consumers to address these communities' needs in disaster planning. American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters and onsite captioning ensured accessible and effective communication for the deaf and hard of hearing during the fire safety training workshops, which were held at Bridges,



Vibrating smoke alarms are installed by Jeff Huddleston (center), fire fighter from the State Fire Marshall's Office. Stacey Webb (right) interprets.



The consumers met with fire department personnel from their county and signed up for appointments to have Lifetone smoke alarms installed and a home safety inspection. The Lifetone smoke alarms were obtained through a FEMA grant.



Jeff Huddleston (center), fire fighter from the State Fire Marshall's Office

The sign-up form was an important tool, as it provided interpreters and fire department personnel with a mode of contact, such as video phone, texting, or TTY, and the preferred mode of communication, such as an ASL interpreter, writing back and forth, and lip reading. In the event a volunteer interpreter was unavailable to go on site with a firefighter to install the vibrating smoke alarms, the group produced a smoke alarm and fire safety informational DVD in ASL with voice and captioning.



Including the consumer in the education and distribution process is essential to creating an effective fire safety plan. It's that simple. Now you can go out and help make your own communities safe.

Donicé is director of Wellness and Education at Bridges, a non-profit agency that serves the deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing communities. She has been with Bridges for almost four years starting as assistant youth director. Three years ago, Donicé started a coalition called EARS (Emergency Awareness and Readiness Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing) with the Library Services for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing, the Davidson County Red Cross, and the Department of Human Services Council for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing. EARS now boasts 23 active agencies, including the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency, 9-1-1, 2-1-1, the National Weather Service, the Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office, the Franklin Mayor's Office of Emergency Management, Purple, the Hearing Loss Association of America, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, TNVOAD, and others.

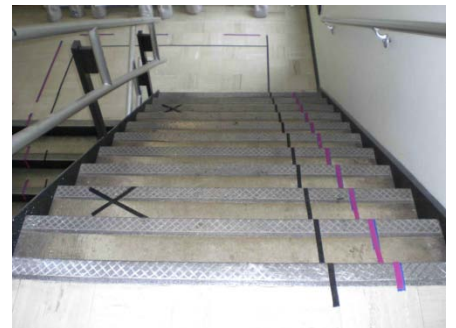


In addition, Donicé was presented with the Distinguished Service Award at the 2011 Tennessee Association of the Deaf (TAD) Conference. The honor is awarded every two years at the TAD Conference

Update on the Current Research Project on Stair Descent Devices.



Funded by FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, Ohio State University and the University of Illinois at Chicago are collaborating on the research to evaluate physical demands seasoned first responders experience as they carry, roll, or slide stair descent devices down a flight of stairs.



NFPA's Fire Protection Research Foundation is chairing the technical oversight panel made up of disability advocates, fire service

personnel and staff and volunteers from code development organizations. The research team includes: Steve Lavender, PhD; Glenn Hedman, MS; Paul Reichelt, PhD; Karen Conrad, PhD; and Jay Mehta, MS.

through video analysis and a structured interview process.

The first year of the study has been spent working with manually carried devices. The second year will look at devices using stair descent tracks and the third year will look at sled- type devices.



To accomplish its goal, the study aims to:

1. Quantify the differences among types of existing evacuation devices with regards to the physical demands they placed on firefighters.
2. Quantify the variation in evacuation times, including occupant preparation for transport and the stair descent process, across different evacuation devices.
3. Determine the impact of environmental factors including Stair width and sense of urgency,
4. Assess usability issues with each of the evaluated devices

A summary of the preliminary results find that:

- Urgency leads to increased muscle activation levels
- There is a limited effect of staircase width with the sampled stair descent devices
- Mixed results were obtained with regards to muscle use
- Muscle recruitment multiplied by the duration of the task strongly suggests there is an advantage in using the extended handle stair chair where the front person can descend the stairs *facing forward*.



Once this study is completed, the team envisions more studies to look at additional devices and consumer opinions.

NFPA Coming Events



Dec. 5-9: NFPA Training Seminar Week, Garden Grove, CA. Call +1 800 344-3555 or +1 508 895-8300.

Dec. 6: [Free webinar](#) - Smart Grid and NFPA Electrical Safety Codes and Standards. Sponsored by the Fire Protection Research Foundation. 12:30-2 pm (EST). [Register now.](#)

Dec. 6: [Alternative Energy Technologies and Electrical Safety Standards](#), Marriott Atlanta Century Center, Atlanta, GA

Dec. 12-14: NFPA's [Fire & Life Safety Conference](#), Orlando, FL

Dec. 12-16: EM/BCP Auditor Training, Doubletree Resort, Orlando, FL. Visit [the DRI International website](#) for more information.

Dec. 12-16: NFPA Training Seminar Week, Orlando, FL. Call +1 800 344-3555 or +1 508 895-8300.

[See NFPA's complete online calendar.](#)



Do you have a story to tell or information to share?

Our readers are people with disabilities, and their relatives, caregivers, and friends.

Our goals are to:

- Provide specialized information about fire and life safety for people with disabilities directly to those with disabilities and to those who help them in order to reduce or eliminate death and injury from fire and other emergencies.
- Provide a forum for the collection and dissemination of information for people with disabilities in support of DARAC's mission.
- Provide personal stories about events, ideas, or solutions from our readers that can guide others in similar circumstances.

Content for future editions will include:

- NFPA-related news
 - DARAC news
 - NFPA codes- and standards-related information
 - Fire safety tips
 - Emergency evacuation information

- Articles relating to the safety of people with disabilities from:

- NFPA staff
- DARAC members
- Other national advocates
- General news
- Our readers

- News from other standards-developing organizations' news

- U.S. Access Board
- ANSI/ICC A117, *Standard for Accessible Buildings and Facilities*
- RESNA
- U.S. Department of Justice
- Other

We'd love to hear your stories and opinions! If you'd like to contribute an article or information consistent with the outline above, please e-mail them to Allan B. Fraser, senior building code specialist and *e-Access* coordinator, at afraser@nfpa.org.

Did You Miss an Issue?



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