e-ACCESS
Your accessible route to fire and life safety information for people with disabilities.

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We'd love to hear it!
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We are not alone!

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

"We're born alone, we live alone, we die alone. Only through our love and friendship can we create the illusion for the moment that we're not alone." ~ Orson Welles

We live in an amazing time. With each passing day I marvel at new technological innovations and advancements particularly those that improve the access to information, communications and ability of people with disabilities to be more empowered with respect to their own safety. Even more astonishing is the realization that these devices and tools work for everyone.

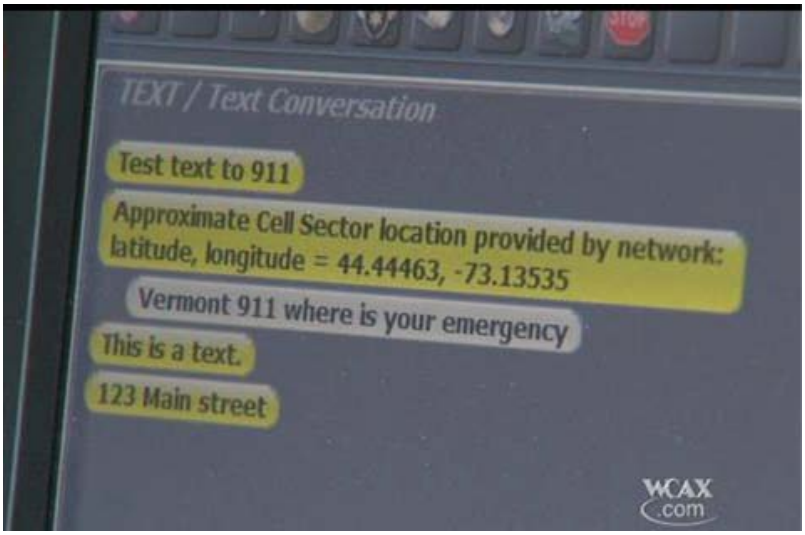
While one size does not fit all, it may, in fact, fit many for whom we never considered might need it and in ways that we never dreamed it might be used. For example, Facebook has become a red hot, international phenomenon both in terms of its use in social contact and connections and as a hugely successful business. Our children are on it constantly. But would you have ever thought of it as having a use as a life saving tool????

In fact, it is! In January, 2011a man with muscular dystrophy was saved from a fire in his home in Spokane, Washington by a man in Indiana after sending for help via Facebook. Katie Utehs of KREM TV, CBS News reports. Click here!

The first piece of information that everyone needs to know for their own safety is that there is an emergency and exactly what the emergency is. The primary notification systems that we require in buildings today are fire alarm systems. These consist of horns, strobe lights, bells and buzzers in non-residential buildings and smoke alarms in residences. Voice communication systems are used in high rise buildings to supplement the messaging piece. In recent years, carbon monoxide alarms and detection systems are being installed on a more frequent basis. These systems and devices have evolved in recent years so that people with partial or total hearing loss will be able to receive the information that there is a fire via flashing strobe lights.

But what about warnings for other types of emergencies? What about floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes? Warnings about these events are generally broadcast on TV or radio and are typically difficult for people with hearing or vision loss to receive and process. The good news is that this is changing. Some stations use closed captioning and even American Sign Language interpreters. Some have the ability to send text messages to

your cell phone if you sign up for that service and this works for everyone, not just those with disabilities.. 911 centers are beginning to accept text messages for help.



At the 27th California State University at Northridge's Conference on Technology and People with Disabilities, (see the next article) some amazing new and emerging technologies were displayed and discussed. I am very excited about the speed, quantity, quality and versatility of these emerging technologies. I think that even Orson Welles might be convinced that there is no illusion, we really aren't alone!

2012 NFPA® Webinars

Get more top-notch instruction for less with NFPA®'s Webinars.

27th Annual CSUN Conference on Technology and People with Disabilities Wrap-up

By: Allan B. Fraser, CBI, CPCA –Senior Building Code Specialist, NFPA

The simple fact is that fire and life safety are even more important to people with disabilities than the rest of the population since it is much harder for them to access information and to navigate the built environment in the case of emergencies. The 27th Annual CSUN Conference on Technology and People with Disabilities was held February 27-March 3, 2012 in San Diego, California and it continued to be a wonderful opportunity for NFPA to provide education about fire and life safety for people with disabilities. We were successful again judging from peoples responses.

This is the fifth year that I've attended the CSUN (California State University at Northridge) Conference as NFPA's representative and each year I've seen it grow in scope, attendees, content and influence as the largest event of its type in the world.

Left to right: Ed Comeau - Campus Firewatch,
Gail Minger - Michael Minger Foundation & NFPA DARAC member
talk with Teresa Parrill at the Center for AAC and Autism booth

This year there were more than 300 general sessions, workshops and more than 135 exhibitors with over 5,500 participants. There were participants from all 50 states, numerous territories and more than 35 foreign countries.

The name, mission and activities of NFPA continued to gain recognition in the disability community this year with our booth in their exposition. This was the second year that we have had a booth space in the always sold out expo hall.

Keynote Speaker, Geri Jewell, and Conference Chair, Mike Paciello, on stage at the Opening Keynote Address.

This year the Keynote Address was an amazing, informative, enlightening and brilliant presentation by stand-up comedian Gerri Jewell who was a star on the former TV show "Facts of Life" and the first actor with cerebral palsy to be featured on a TV series. Her stories, experiences and humorous style mesmerized the audience of over 400 who simply didn't want her to stop.

Gerri Jewell

Over the three day conference, I distributed over 200 copies of the July/August 2010 issue of Journal, more than 200 copies of the *Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities*©, and 400 CD's with all this and more material in accessible formats. The Standards and Handbooks we brought were donated to the CSUN Campus Library.

I met a number of people who were not previously familiar with NFPA and they were very interested to learn about our mission and our work related to people with disabilities. I was thrilled to have a number of people actually come looking for the NFPA booth. They had either heard about us from others or had been to my presentations or stopped at the booth last year. We are already beginning to make plans for next year's conference.

NFPA's 2012 Conference & Expo Features a Demonstration of Emergency Stair Descent Devices

NFPA recognizes that fire and life safety may be more important to people with disabilities because of the functional barriers to accessing information and the physical barriers within the built environment.

Volunteer John Kane & NFPA Staff Dawn Cedrone during training with stair descent devices

Several manufacturers of "Stair descent devices" (evacuation chairs) used to assist in the emergency evacuation of people with mobility functional needs from buildings, will be demonstrating their devices at the 2012 NFPA Conference & Expo at the Mandalay Bay

Convention Center, June 11-14, 2012. Company representatives will be explaining their devices and demonstrating how they work.

EvacChair Brand

Garavanta EvacuTrac

The demonstration "stage" is a modular 6 foot high, 8 foot by 8 foot platform with a set of stairs that is disassembled and used for other conferences and educational seminars.

Demo "Stage" at NFPA Expo

Visitors will be able to see the devices in action and talk with the vendors. The demonstrations have been very successful at past events and visitors showed great interest and asked many questions of the vendors.

EvacChair Staff Demonstrating

While not endorsing any particular manufacturer or stair descent device NFPA facilitated these demonstrations to help educate users, assistants, caregivers, building owners and managers and first responders about this evacuation option.

Gravanta operated by one staff person

Stair descent devices are a recognized evacuation option, but NFPA does not endorse any vendor or stair descent device, nor has it evaluated, approved or certified these devices for compliance with NFPA codes and standards or those of any other organization. Stair descent devices are not currently required by model codes and there are currently no standards available by which to evaluate these devices, but NFPA 101 does provide some recommended performance criteria and guidance information in its annex at A.7.2.12.2.3(2).

Don't Miss the 2012 NFPA® Conference & Expo!

Click here to register

National ADA Symposium 2012 - Orlando, Florida

March 11 – 14, 2012

The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design and Title II Regulations became fully effective on March 15, 2012. This standard, in conjunction with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act, directly affect all businesses, local governments, and covered employers. **Are we ready for these changes?**

NFPA staff attended the National Symposium participating in training with over 400 other attendees on the new standards and regulations that affect us all! The Symposium sessions answered many questions that are important for businesses and communities. There were multiple tracks of educational sessions where attendees focused in on the specific types of challenges covered in the new standards and regulations as related to their specific area of expertise or responsibility.

Some highlights of the Symposium included:

- Training on the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design that went into effect March 15, 2012, specifically what's new and/or different.

- Related cutting edge tips and information on the ADA, including the new Dept. of Justice regulations.
- Session on "Strategic Planning for Emerging Issues "concept mapping" type process in for generating ideas, synthesizing emerging issues,
  and sorting through actionable plans that will facilitate creative, innovative, and sustainable change on behalf of individuals with disabilities.

L.Elaine Sutton-Mbionwu,
Southeast ADA Center

- Sessions on a wide-range of ADA related topics.
- Sessions that met the ADA Coordinator Training Certification Program fundamental and elective credits.

- Knowledgeable and experienced presenters including people from the U.S. Dept. of Justice, Access Board, the EEOC, National Center on Accessibility and the ANSI/ICC A117.1 Committee.

This was an excellent event with NFPA staff bringing back a lot of information that will help us be more effective in our work on fire and life safety for people with disabilities.

NFPA Expands Fire & Life Safety Education for People with Disabilities at 2012 NFPA Conference & Expo!

At the 2012 NFPA Conference & Expo in Las Vegas, Nevada, June 11-14 there will be six (6) educational sessions that should be of great interest to the disability community in

addition to the Stair Descent Devices demonstration booth in the Expo Hall. (See article on page)

Register and come check out these great sessions:

Tues, June 12, 2012 11:00 am - 12:30 pm

"Public Sector and Private Sector — Partners in Preparedness and Disaster Response" (T32)

Presenter: Kelley Okolita, DRI International

Tues, June 12, 2010 2:45 pm - 3:45 pm

Voice Intelligibility Requirements of the 2010 Edition of NFPA 72® (T44)

Presenter: Ray Grill, Arup

Tues, June 12, 2010 2:45 pm - 3:45 pm

T50 Practical Guide to Emergency Preparedness in the Workplace

Presenter: Michael Larabel, Amway Inc.

Tues, June 12, 2010 4:15 pm- 5:15 pm

T57 Home Fire Safety Solutions for People with Disabilities

Presenters: Nancy Trench, Oklahoma State University, Gary Olsen, Nevada Association of the Deaf

Tues, June 12, 2010 4:15 pm - 5:15 pm

T64 Stair Descent Devices: An Ergonomic Evaluation of Evacuation Equipment Used by Fire Fighters

Presenters: Steven Lavender, Ohio State University; Glenn Hedman, University of Illinois at Chicago; Paul Reichelt, University of Illinois at Chicago; Karen Conrad, University of Illinois at Chicago

Wed, June 13, 2010 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

W35 Autism Awareness for Fire and Life Safety Education

Presenter: William Cannata, Jr, Autism and Law Enforcement Education Coalition

Wed, June 13, 2010 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

W40 "Get Real" Using NFPA's Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities

Presenter: Allan Fraser, NFPA

"Will the Real Service Animal, Please Stand Up?"

Service animals enhance fire and life safety for individuals with disabilities.

By: Julie M. Shaw, Executive Director,
disAbility Solutions for Independent Living, Inc.

Before discussing how service animals perform their roles enhancing fire and life safety for individuals with disabilities, I need to describe exactly what legally constitutes a service animal. Since the 1990 passage of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), the use of service animals has continued to grow dramatically. There are simply not enough service animal training schools across the nation. The demand far exceeds the availability trained animals. Until recently, the lack of a clear definition of "service animal" prompted some unexpected, entertaining, yet far-fetched interpretations of what a service animal was and what it did. There were so many issues and concerns that the Department of Justice released an updated rulemaking on the use of service animals effective March 15, 2012. It clearly defines service animal for future interpretations of the law.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) now defines a "service animal" as either a dog or a miniature horse that has been specifically trained to mitigate the individual's disability. I know what you're thinking. Miniature Horses? Really? More about that later on.

The clear definition was necessary since birds, monkeys, service snakes, "phoo phoo" dogs that ride in strollers, costumed animals that pose for pictures, and more have all been claimed in the past by people as being their "service" animals in attempts to take advantage of a civil right that was intended for individuals with disabilities. And yes, I am sad to say, all of these examples came just from the State of Florida!

The only service animals are allowed in public facilities and programs, ie. dogs and miniature horses that have been individually trained to mitigate the owner's disability or to perform a task specific to the owner's disability. An attack dog or guard dog that is specifically trained for those purposes doesn't meet the definition in that it's not "trained to mitigate the owner's disability or to perform a task specific to the owner's disability."

Don't be confused - companion dogs, emotional support dogs and pets are not service animals. Assistance animals, emotional support animals, companion animals and pets belong at home and not in public facilities unless the facility is designed to include animals. These types of animals provide comfort merely by their presence however they do not perform a task to assist specifically to the needs of the person with a disability. If the animal is not specifically trained to perform a task to mitigate a disability, then it is not a service animal! The new ADA definition does not, however, limit the broader definition of assistance animals used in the Federal Fair Housing Act (for housing) or the Air Carrier Access Act (for airline travel).

In addition, the Department of Justice also revised the regulations to include specific new provisions for miniature horses that have been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Miniature horses generally range in height from 24 inches to 34 inches measured to the shoulders and generally weigh between 70 and 100 pounds. They generally are no larger than a German Sheppard dog.

The list of specific tasks that service animals can be trained to perform is almost endless, but there are some common tasks that most service animals are trained to perform. Service animals are not required to be trained by a licensed school or individual and the owner is not required to carry any certification, license or other documentation for the service animal.

The ADA allows individuals with disabilities to train their own animal to meet their specific needs. A good reason why the potential tasks a service animals can be trained to do are endless. The fire and life safety of individuals with disabilities is one of the primary reasons for having a service animal. They allow countless individuals to live independently and safely.

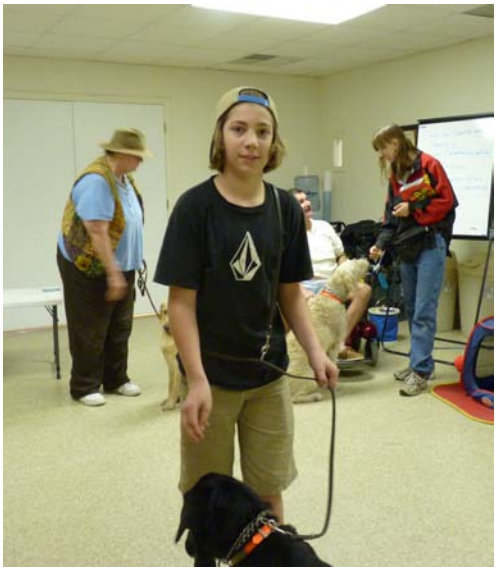
Some common tasks that service animals perform for a person with a mobility or physical impairment include, but are not limited to, pulling someone in a wheelchair, tugging off clothes, fetching an item or medicine, helping with laundry, paying cashiers, opening and closing drawers and doors, turning on and off lights, picking up items that are dropped, assisting with balance, and more.

Common tasks for an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing include, but are not limited to, being trained to stop and alert the owner when they drop an item, alerting the owner to fire & CO alarms, knocking, or a phone ringing or buzzing, alarm clocks and stove timers. In the area of inter-personal safety they can alert their owner when they are being approached from behind by another individual.

For an individual who has seizures, service animals can actually be trained to detect a change in the owners body chemistry through their scent, to warn the owner to sit or lie down in order to minimize injury during the seizure, provide comfort during the seizure by laying the animal's body against the individual, lick the face or hand to provide a touch with reality, to retrieve medicine, and/or keep the individual safe during the seizure.

Psychiatric service animals can be trained to attract and retain the attention and focus of their owner in order to deter a panic attack or to avoid a psychiatric episode. Sometimes bystanders may misinterpret the animal's behavior as it may be trained to jump up in the air to get the owner's attention.

Service animals can carry emergency medications and/or instructions in their vests specific to their owner's condition such as seizure medication and nitroglycerin. Some service animals are even capable of being trained to dial 911 on specially designed phones.



The use of service animals that serve children with autism is becoming more common due to recent advancements in research and training. Some common characteristics of autism are the lack of socialization, the avoidance of eye contact, a lack of the ability to communicate with others and the need/desire to escape or take flight from the present situation. The presence of a service animal leashed to a child has proven to be a natural and effective safety mechanism. Service animals for children with autism are commonly used to prevent them from darting or running from the scene and getting lost or unknowingly putting themselves in danger. The presence of the service animal also helps to promote more

socialization by helping the child to engage with others. They assist in keeping the child calm and therefore less likely to need another person "attached" to them 24/7.

Some typical tasks also include stopping the child at intersections, assisting them to safely cross streets, and bringing the child back to the adult or their house when the child refuses or cannot understand the verbal instructions. A child with autism can commonly handle being in a crowd with their service animal, can respond to a person who is talking to them and is safer from the risk of running away when scared or uncomfortable.

With the increasing number of veterans returning home with post traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), service animal requests are at an all time high. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is beginning to implement service animal programs. The Wounded Warrior Projects that are utilizing service animals for a variety of disabilities, not just PTSD.

Service animals can be trained to guide visually impaired individuals around objects, maneuver terrain changes and cross traffic safely. Medical alert animals can be trained to alert an "assistant" to its owner's medical condition during and after the condition occurs. Conditions include, but are not limited to, heart attacks, diabetic episodes, blood pressure problems, asthma problems or virtually any condition the dog is able to sense a change in the chemical actions, and hence the scent, of the body. Service animals can also be trained to bring medical items to the fallen owner including items in a back pack worn by the dog or items from a table.

The safety needs of individuals with disabilities necessitate a much broader range of devices and strategies than most of us would ever think about. The use of service animals has opened up a whole new world of opportunity for individuals with disabilities and safety is the common thread regardless of the type of disability or the task the service animal is trained to perform.

Julie M. Shaw is the Executive Director of disAbility Solutions for Independent Living (DSIL) in Florida. Julie was formerly the Executive ADA Administrator for Governor Bush.

She has been published by the National Institute of Disability Research. In addition, she is the first hearing person ever to be invited to join the Florida Association of the Deaf.

NFPA Coming Events

July 2012

Jul. 9-13 NFPA Training Seminar Week: Quincy, MA.

- Life Safety

Jul. 9-13 & 16-20 NFPA Training Seminar Week: Indianapolis, IN.

- Electrical
- Life Safety
- Fire Alarm Code
- Sprinkler

Jul. 16-20 NFPA Training Seminar Week: San Francisco, CA.

- Electrcial
- Life Safety
- Fire Alarm Code
- Sprinkler

Jul. 23-27 NFPA Training Seminar Week: Williamsburg, VA.

- Electrcial
- Life Safety
- Fire Alarm Code
- Sprinkler
- Other

Jul. 25-27 NFPA Training Seminar Week: Hasbrouk Heights, NJ.

- Electrical

- Other

Jul. 30-Aug. 3 NFPA Training Seminar Week: Quincy, MA.

- Life Safety

August 2012

Aug. 6-10 & 13-17 NFPA Training Seminar Week: Philadelphia, PA.

- Electrical
- Life Safety
- Fire Alarm Code
- Sprinkler

Aug. 6-10 & 13-17 NFPA Training Seminar Week: Seattle, WA.

- Electrical
- Life Safety
- Fire Alarm Code
- Sprinkler

Aug. 20-24 NFPA Training Seminar Week: Orlando, FL.

- Electrcial
- Life Safety
- Fire Alarm Code
- Sprinkler

Aug. 22-24 NFPA Training Seminar Week: Anaheim, CA.

- Electrcial
- Other

Aug. 27-31 NFPA Training Seminar Week: Alexandra, VA.

- Sprinkler
- Other

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?

No problem! You can read the back issues of e-ACCESS by clicking here.