# e-ACCESS

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

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**Do you have a story to tell or information to share? We'd love to hear it!**
**Contribute to a future issue of *e-ACCESS* by sending it to afraser@nfpa.org**

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# "R" is for Respect!

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

One of my co-workers found several interesting old stamps when she was looking through some memorabilia she inherited. Knowing the focus of my work, she brought this one in to show me, and it got me interested in finding out more about where it came from.

The stamp turned out to have been issued 37 years ago on October 12, 1974 in Arlington, Texas, during a meeting of the, then, National Association of Retarded Children (NARC). It was issued by the U.S. Postal Service as one of a group calling attention to matters of national concern, such as drug abuse, the need for blood donors, and the importance of getting cancer checkups.

NARC, whose motto was "Retarded children can be helped," had begun a fund-raising ad campaign in the early 1970s to help it achieve its goal of deinstitutionalizing and normalizing mentally retarded children. In 1971, Barbra Streisand became their spokesperson in both print ads and television public service announcements. Illustrated with a Richard Avedon photo, an ad featuring Barbra appeared in magazines with the simple quote: "My next child could be retarded. So could yours."

Photo by: Richard Avedon. It was used in NARC ads in 1971.

Barbra also appeared in a 1971 public service commercial that aired on network television. Wearing her hair long and quoting lyrics from her hit song "People," Streisand urged viewers to give NARC their support.

Barbra's involvement with NARC continued through 1974. A collectible LP (NARC-3766) from the 1972– 1973 campaign featured her and other celebrities, such as Ryan O'Neal, Woody Allen, and Johnny Carson, presenting 30- or 60-second radio ads supporting the volunteer organization.

I have to admit that I found it hard to look at this 1970's campaign through my 2011 "lens." I know that NARC, the Postal Service, Streisand, and all the other celebrities had the most honorable goals of helping children with cognitive functional needs, but it really struck me how important it is to use the right language and have the right perspective when we talk about people with disabilities. The wrong word, phrase, or image used unknowingly can undo years of progress and be incredibly hurtful to another human being.

At first glance, the stamp brought very mixed emotions. The phrase "Retarded Children Can Be Helped" simply rubbed me the wrong way, and the color, light brown, depressed me. But it was the terribly sad expression on the beautiful little girl that seemed the most out of place to me.

I have been blessed with meeting many, many people with cognitive disabilities that span most of the known spectrum, and the vast majority of them are happy, friendly, very outgoing people. Few, if any, have had the expression of the little girl on the stamp.

People with cognitive disabilities are very concerned with fire and life safety. My friend Mike Seaborn is a perfect example. Mike suffered a traumatic brain injury in a 1998 car accident, but that hasn't stopped him from championing fire and life safety for people with disabilities.

"When I learned why I was in the hospital, I got mad at myself for letting it happen. My Mom told me that it wasn't my fault and that I had to learn to live with it. That is what I thought she said at first, but if I was listening, I would have heard "I have to live with it, but I do not have to let it rule your life."

People with disabilities have functional needs that make it difficult for them to access, process, and apply the safety information in the form that it is typically provided, and they need to help ensure their own safety. Mike is helping to make a difference using his abilities rather than letting his disabilities control his life. To read more about Mike, Click here.

NARC worked hard over the years and continually improved its resources and ability to serve the functional needs of people with cognitive disabilities. By 1955, its membership had reached 29,000 with 412 local units. By 1960, NARC membership totaled 62,000. Four years later, it had 100,000 members, and by 1974, membership stood at well over 225,000. In 1992, recognizing that the words "retardation" and "retarded" had come to be seen as pejorative, derogatory, and demeaning, the organization changed its name to The Arc.

The Arc

For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

NFPA, as an organization whose mission is to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education, have been sensitive to the impact language has on our constituency, and we, too, have adapted accordingly. In fact, many regard Kathie Snow's 2009 piece "People First Language" by Kathie Snow as the definitive article on the subject.

Although the term "mental retardation" is still used in the medical field and in many state and federal laws, many other areas now use the terms "intellectual disability" and "developmental disability," and we are doing everything in our power to make sure they're adopted more broadly. NFPA strongly believes the only "r-word" to use when referring to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is "Respect."

To be sure, there's a lot more work to be done, but that beautiful little girl on the 1974 stamp doesn't need to be sad anymore. In fact, maybe the Postal Service could celebrate 60 years of progress by putting this young lady's photo, from The ARC's website, on a stamp.

# How We Teach Is Just As Important As What We Teach!

*By Stacy Everson, SEEDS Educational Services*

Knowing what to say or how to teach people with developmental disabilities about fire safety can be challenging, especially when you do not have adapted material. You may not have the correct educational materials to reach out appropriately to the different subgroups of individuals with varying functional needs. People with developmental disabilities may simply not know what to do in case a fire. People with autism learn primarily visually and have died in fires after running back into a burning building to seek a place where they felt safe. Many people with intellectual disabilities will not leave a building without verbal instructions to do so.

Since 2003, SEEDS Educational Services has partnered with Oklahoma State University to develop fire safety programs appropriate for people with developmental disabilities: focusing on smoke alarm awareness, home exit plans, and fire prevention. However, in order to provide fire safety education to this population, fire safety messages and materials have to be modified, and given in alternate formats for fire safety education to be effective.

When people with developmental disabilities were living independently or left at home for periods of time were given a ten question test regarding fire safety, 85% answered less than

50% of the test questions correctly, and only 22% knew what to do in a room full of smoke. Most of the participants stated they would "wait to be rescued" and not leave their house without verbal instructions from staff or the fire personnel. Upon completing the SEEDS fire safety program, 86% could answer the questions correctly. Furthermore, in-home follow-up showed that 91% of the participants could physically demonstrate two separate evacuation procedures to an evaluator.

People with developmental disabilities can and do learn if given the correct information in a format that they can understand. SEEDS has created a fire safety curriculum designed to help teach fire safety to community residents who have disabilities. The curriculum is available free through our website (www.seedseducation.org) to anyone serving this population. In addition, SEEDS has also created a Fire Educator's Kit to assist Fire and Life Safety Educators to learn about teaching people with developmental disabilities fire safety messages and continue outreach efforts. We are hoping to get the messages out to all who can utilize the material. Please feel free to contact SEEDS Educational Services with questions or suggestions.

*Stacy F. Everson, RN, BSN is the Founder and Executive Director of SEEDS Education, Inc. She is a Registered Nurse with a Bachelors Degree in Nursing and Public Health. She has national certification in developmental disabilities and family life education. She specializes in social-sexual education, speaking/trainings, work-shops & conferences, coordinating and collaboration with other agencies in creating effective educational tools and opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. You can reach her at: stacy@seedseducation.org*

SEEDS
Educational Services, Inc.

# NFPA's 2011 Conference & Expo in Boston Featured 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.

Evac-Chair, Garavanta, Stryker and Creative Safety Solutions , manufacturers of "Stair descent devices" (evacuation chairs) used to assist in the emergency evacuation of people with mobility functional needs from buildings, demonstrated their devices at the 2011 NFPA Conference & Expo at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, June 12-14, 2011. Company representatives explained their devices and demonstrated how they work.

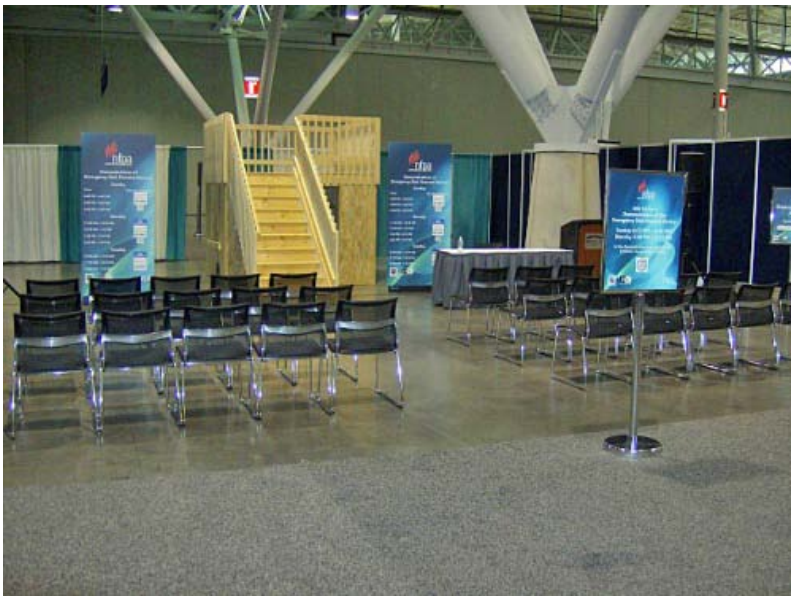
*EvacChair Brand*

*Garavanta EvacuTrac*

*Stryker Brand*

*Creative Safety Solutions Brand*

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

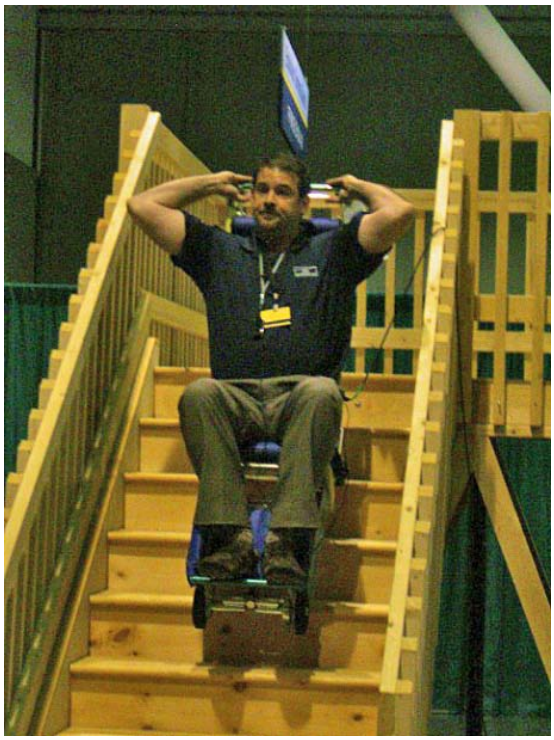


*Demo "Stage" at NFPA Expo*

Visitors were able to see the devices in action and talk with the vendors. The demonstrations were very successful as 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).

# The ADA, Accessibility Standards and Safety

*By Kathy Gips, New England ADA Center Institute for Human Centered Design (formerly Adaptive Environments)*

Most people understand that accessibility regulations and standards are part of civil rights law that gets people with disabilities into buildings by removing architectural barriers so they can participate in various aspects of life. What many people don't understand, however, is the role accessibility standards play in safety issues.

Since the late 1950's when accessibility standards were first being developed, ensuring the safety of people with disabilities in public buildings was a priority. The 1961 *American National Standard Specifications for Making Buildings and Facilities Accessible to, and Usable by, the Physically Handicapped* was explicitly intended to make all buildings and facilities used by the public accessible to, and functional for, people with "non-ambulatory disabilities, semi-ambulatory disabilities, sight disabilities, hearing disabilities, disabilities of incoordination and aging" and reflected "great concern for life and limb."

That initial standard was only six pages long, but it included a wide range of design features that address safety such as barricades at open manholes and excavation areas near pedestrian traffic; a minimum height of 7 feet (2 meters) for hanging signs, ceiling lights, and fixtures; handrails on ramps and stairs; step risers no higher than 7 inches (17.7 centimeters); audible as well as visual warning signals for people who are blind and deaf; knurled handles and knobs on doors that are not intended for normal use and might prove dangerous for people who are blind; and exit signs and lighting on ramps. Since entrances also serve as exits, the requirement that one primary entrance be usable by people who use wheelchairs was intended to provide at least one accessible exit, although the standard notes that "it is preferable, that all or most entrances (exits) should be accessible."

Some of those design specifications have gone the way of the dinosaur. There are no more barricades at manhole covers, no more knurled handles, and no requirement for lighting at ramps. But many of the specifications are still with us, and they provide the underpinnings for the 252-page *ADA Standards for Accessible Design*. Some safety issues have evolved so far that the federal agencies responsible for developing the *ADA Standards* decided to reference other organizations' standards rather than create their own. In addition to those 252 pages, we also have referenced standards addressing fire alarm systems and accessible egress requirements, as well as safety codes for elevators, platform lifts, stairway lifts, and playgrounds.

When assessing an existing facility and planning to make it accessible, it's important to keep in mind safety specifications, as well as the specifications that get people in and around the building.

*Kathy Gips is Director of Training at the New England ADA Center, one of ten federally funded ADA centers in the ADA National Network. Ms. Gips provides trainings and technical assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the federal Fair Housing Act and related state and federal laws. Prior to working at the New England ADA Center Ms. Gips was Assistant Director for Community Services at the Massachusetts Office on Disability. She has over 20 years experience in the field of access for people with disabilities.*

*To contact your regional ADA Center call 800-949-4232 voice/tty or find your center at www.adata.org. The ADA National Network provides information, guidance and training on the ADA tailored to meet the needs of business, government and individuals at local, regional and national levels.*

NACCHO
National Association of County & City Health Officials
The National Connection for Local Public Health

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

On May 25, 2011, NFPA Senior Building Code Specialist Allan B. Fraser, CBI, CPCA, presented the webinar "Get Real Using NFPA's Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities" for the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), which represents local health departments. NACCHO supports efforts that protect and improve the health of all people and communities by promoting national policy, developing resources and programs, seeking health equity, and supporting effective local public health practice and systems.

The webinar was designed to enable NACCHO members to identify the specific functions that are a part of the building evacuation process; plan for identified, specific functions when developing an evacuation plan; walk through the development of actual plans; and practice and update the plan.

NACCHO was very pleased not only with the positive evaluations from participants, but with the amount of interest the webinar generated. According to its evaluation, NACCHO reports that, overall, the webinar met the attendee's expectations and that most attendees said they would use the information learned in the webinar to improve their professional practices. Attendees also reported that, after the webinar, they knew how to develop, practice, and update emergency plans.

When asked what was most useful to them in this webinar, attendees cited the background information and surveys and the fact that Fraser talked to people, not just the slides, and used good examples. They felt that the review of the data captured in the forms was very informative and that hearing about specific examples for evacuating from a first responder's experience was very valuable.

CLEARING A PATH
FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
CLEARS THE PATH FOR EVERYONE!

"I liked the framework and tone of the webinar," wrote one attendee. "I would welcome an opportunity to discuss, through this medium, partnerships that engage the whole community in planning to integrate the principles discussed which can be extended to the broader community. Building evacuation planning into routines of organizations and communities is also crucial because most offices, schools, non-school environments, have individuals with disabilities. Thank you for a great webinar!"

Another wrote that he planned to the archived version of the webinar to his colleagues and that he would recommend Fraser to the planning committee for his organization's annual Homeland Security Conference.

"Thank you for providing a knowledgeable, practical speaker," he said.

# Papers for the 2011 IFPO Essay Competition Due September 15, 2011!

The deadline to submit papers for the **IFPO** 2011 annual essay competition is September 15, 2011. Those interested in submitting a paper for the 2011 competition can click here for details and rules.

# Fire Safety for People with Autism Spectrum Disorder

*By Captain William A. Cannata, Jr*
*Westwood Fire Department*

Autism is a general term used to describe a group of complex, lifelong, neurologically based developmental brain disorders known as Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD). The other PDDs are Asperger Syndrome, Rett Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder–Not Otherwise Specified, or PDD-NOS. Many parents and professionals refer to this group as Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

According to recent Centers for Disease Control statistics, ASD affects 1 in 110 newborns in the United States. An estimated 1.5 million individuals in this country and tens of millions worldwide are affected by autism, and government statistics suggest the prevalence rate of autism is increasing by 10 to 17 percent annually. ASD knows no socioeconomic, racial, or ethnic boundaries, although it affects more males than females by 4 to 1.

Because autism impairs a person's ability to communicate and relate to others, individuals with an ASD may face difficulty forming relationships, adapting to new situations, and gaining acceptance in the community. Autism is also associated with rigid routines and repetitive behaviors, such as obsessively arranging objects or following very specific routines. Symptoms can range from very mild to quite severe.

Teaching and interacting with children and adults with ASD can be challenging, but they are not impossible tasks. Fire and life safety educators can modify existing programs to teach this audience.

The first step is to work with the classroom teacher, who will know the unique learning styles of each student and how to approach them with a new program. Every child has its own way of learning, and it is no different for children with ASD. The curriculum simply needs to be adapted to meet their individual learning styles, although it is important to remember that an adapted program that works for one student may not work with another.

The different learning styles you may have to work with are visual, auditory, logical/mathematical, bodily/kinesthetic, and musical/rhythmic. The teacher will help you adapt your fire safety programs to the learning style of the child.

Along with adapting the classroom curriculum, fire and life safety educators should work with children with ASD and their teachers on fire drills, which can be a problem for students with ASD. Many people with ASD have sensory issues that may make fire drills stressful. The strobe lights and horns may be very difficult for a person with ASD to tolerate, and they can sometimes trigger a negative reaction.

One way to overcome this is to desensitize the student using many practice fire drill sessions. Because doing multiple drills is not practical, you may have to record the horns and have the teacher use a portable strobe light to conduct training sessions. And teachers may have to do this 10 times a day for weeks, so the children can learn the steps and routine of evacuating in the event of an emergency. Once the drill is mastered, the next step is having the students follow a secondary route or evacuating them from a different classroom or another part of the building. Data collection will determine if the students are making progress in learning these skills.

It would be impossible for a fire safety educator to perform these training sessions with each and every student, so giving teachers and staff the information and materials to accomplish these goals is the best approach.

These practice drills can be written into the children's Individualized Education Plans (IEP) to ensure their safety in the event of an emergency. The IEP, a written document developed for each public school student who is eligible for special education, is created by the parents, teachers, and people who work with these children to help them meet their educational goals. Quarterly goals are established, and a review is conducted once a year. If the initial plan is unsuccessful, the team meets to modify the plan. Maintenance of the completed goals will be part of the future IEP.

To enforce what the child learns at school, family members or residential staff should practice home exit drills with him or her. Many people with ASD are prone to wandering, so establishing a safe meeting place is critical. One family I know has the meeting place in the family's car. When they evacuate the house and get into the car, they listen to the child with ASD's favorite audiotapes to keep him calm and reduce his stress. This is a good example of modifying the home fire drill to accommodate the person with ASD.

With the numbers of people diagnosed with ASD growing so rapidly, we cannot ignore the fire safety of this population. As Stacy Everson from SEEDS Educational Services says, "You need to teach people based on their capacity to learn with age-appropriate tools." People with ASD are perfectly capable of learning safety skills with the right kind of adaptive fire and life safety education curricula and input from teachers.

*Bill Cannata, a member of the fire service for 33 years, has been an officer with the Westwood, Massachusetts, Fire Department for the past 13 years. He also has been a Massachusetts Fire Academy instructor for 15 years. Bill joined the The ALEC Program (Autism and Law Enforcement Education Coalition) in November 2003 and, in January 2006, became the statewide coordinator of ALEC.*

*ALEC currently educates first responders across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts about Autism Spectrum Disorder and trains fire and life safety educators to meet the needs of children with ASD.*

*ALEC also trains firefighters on the best practices for intervening in an emergency involving someone with ASD. ALEC has trained over 12,000 first responders in Massachusetts. Bill is also the parent of a child with ASD.*

***For additional resources click on the images below:***

# NFPA Coming Events

**Sept. 12:** Proposals due for educational presentations at NFPA's 2012 Conference & Expo in Las Vegas.

**Sept. 20-21:** Dust Symposium, Detroit, MI. Sponsored by The Fire Protection Research Foundation and NFPA.

**Sept. 27-28:** 2nd Annual Electric Vehicle Safety Standards Summit, Detroit, MI. Co-hosted by NFPA and SAE International

**Dec. 12-14:** NFPA's Fire & Life Safety Conference, Orlando, FL

**Oct. 27-29:** NFPA's "Backyards & Beyond" Wildland Fire Education Conference, Denver, CO

**See NFPA's complete** online calendar.

# NFPA's Part of the National Preparedness Month Annual Campaign!

National Preparedness Month (NPM) is an annual campaign to encourage Americans to prepare for emergencies in their homes, schools, organizations, businesses, and communities. NPM is lead by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and is sponsored by the *Ready* Campaign in partnership with the Citizen Corps. Every September, NPM works with coalition members to increase emergency preparedness awareness and activities across the nation. NFPA is proud to be a part of this campaign.

All disasters are inherently local, affecting families and their communities, businesses and their customers, and organizations and their members. It takes all parts of a community, not just the government, to effectively prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters. It is critical that the entire emergency preparedness community, including the public, disaster survivors, civic leaders, volunteers, faith- and community-based organizations, private-sector businesses, and local government, work together to develop their community's ability to withstand the potential impacts of disasters, respond quickly, and recover in a way that increases the community's resilience. Building community resilience requires close coordination among the government, community organizations, individuals, and emergency managers to plan for the needs of the whole community.

This September marks the eighth annual NPM. This year's campaign focuses on remembering disasters from our past, be they the tenth anniversary of the September 11th attacks

or the disasters in Alabama and Missouri earlier this year, and asking our communities to work together to make our country more resilient. We encourage you to join the preparedness team and help ensure that you and your family, neighbors, workplace, and community are *Ready*.

For more information, visit www.Ready.gov.

**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 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

- 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.