e-ACCESS

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

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We Could All Go Back to School!

Allan B. Fraser, CBI, CPCA, Sr. Bldg Code Specialist, NFPA

As children all over America head to their bus stops to go back to school, they look forward to starting a new year of learning and new experiences. It's also a time for parents, teachers, administrators and other public officials to think about something that we too often forget to send with them along with their lunches, backpacks and calculators: an emergency evacuation plan. Every child should have a plan, but a plan is even more critical if the child has a disability.

Given events of the past few years, we have all become more aware of the importance of being able to protect everyone in a building in the event of an emergency. It's not just a fire drill anymore, its emergency evacuation or emergency planning. Earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornados and other natural disasters along with man-made incidents have all resulted in tragic personal injuries when people could not get out of buildings or be relocated to safe areas within buildings. The risks are significantly higher for people with disabilities. Our schools are not immune from these events and we owe it to our children to have good plans in place. That is just one of the reasons that NFPA has developed two downloadable guides for developing *emergency evacuation plans for school* children or *anyone with a disability.*

We have made a good start on creating "accessibility" in the built environment in the past 35 years, but we still have a ways to go. Local and national newspaper, television and radio news report stories about people with disabilities of all ages being left in buildings during evacuation or relocation drills in which everyone else in the building participated. Accessibility rules and regulations have somehow developed unanticipated consequences creating a mindset in many Americans that makes us tend to look at two separate groups of people, those with disabilities and those without.

In reality, we will all be people with disabilities at some point in our lives. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, almost 50 million people in this country have one or more disabilities that rise to the ADA level. That’s about one in five Americans.

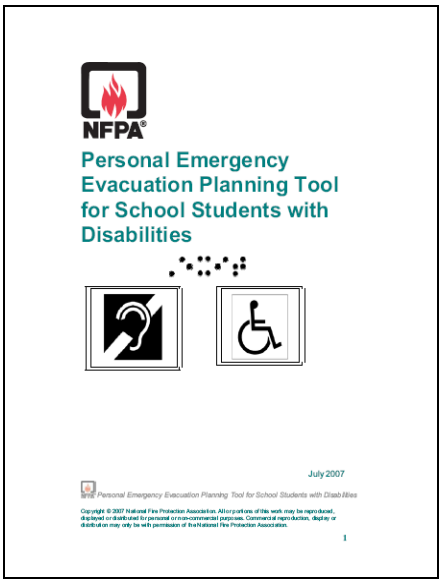
NFPA codes and standards have long considered and included provisions for people with disabilities. Our website page on disabilities has a lot of good, free safety information for people with disabilities and their friends, families, and caregivers but we still want to do more.

e-ACCESS can become a vehicle for changing the mindset where fire and life safety for people with disabilities is concerned. It can be the instrument through which people with disabilities can easily obtain and share information about fire and life safety issues to help themselves and to educate others.

e-ACCESS is where people with disabilities can share their fire and life safety tips and experiences, both good and bad, for the benefit of everyone.

If your child has an IEP you should make sure they also have a school emergency evacuation plan specifically designed for them!

Check out NFPA's Student Planning Guide *Personal Emergency Evacuation Planning Tool for School Students with Disabilities* at: *www.nfpa.org/disabilities*



NFPA®

Personal Emergency Evacuation Planning Tool for School Students with Disabilities

July 2007

NFPA Personal Emergency Evacuation Planning Tool for School Students with Disabilities

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About Mike Seaborn

I had the wonderful good fortune to “meet” Mike Seaborn a little over a year ago. Mike sent me an e-mail after finding our “Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities” on our website.

Mike sent me his story and his “Fire Safety Tips for People with Disabilities” and has been kind enough to give us permission to reprint them here. The following is his unedited letter.

Allan B. Fraser
e-ACCESS Coordinator

Hello my name is mike Seaborn; I Suffered Severe Traumatic Brain Injury from a car crash August 22, 1998. I was in an Auto – Body apprenticeship at Bill Storeys Pontiac Buick, I was just there 4 months in total before my mishap.

I was a passenger in a Z28 with a T – Bar Roof. My friend said we were coming around a sharp corner on the way to his house when another car cut us off the road. I landed head first into a tree and fell into a pile of rocks. The only bones that were broken, was my left check bone and my skull was fractured. My frontal lobe hit the front of my skull and then smashed into the back of my skull with a twist. I considered myself Lucky that day I didn’t Die.

I ended up at St Michael’s Hospital in Toronto; I was in a Coma for 5.5 weeks. When I woke up from the Coma, they sent me to St. Mary’s of the Lake Rehabilitation Hospital in Kingston. There I had to learn to eat, walk, talk clearly, and not to forget so much. But I do unless I write it down; I had to learn why I was there. When I learned why I was there, I got mad at myself for letting it happen. My Mom told me that it wasn’t my fault 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 had to live with it but I do not have to let it rule your life. I have to remember Mom’s are usually always right. My rehabilitation was 5 months in the rehabilitation hospital;

my physiotherapist started me out with putting one foot in front of the other. Tell this day I do the same. Remembering what my Mom said because I wrote it down in my agenda binder. Everything just fell into place. I left St. Mary's in Jan. 20, 1999, and started my Community Rehabilitation with my Case Manager Barb Claimin. Barb had tremendous rehab assistants one took me to college for a computer course and I passed with flying colors. That is were my Fire Prevention & Escape for Disabled come into view. I got the internet and went from Fire Dept. web sites to University web sites gathering the information I needed and summarized the information into my Presentation to give to anyone willing to listen.

I'm glad my brother was a Volunteer Firefighter; this is where I met Chief Tony Brownson. He ask me to join their Fire Department, to help wash trucks. I joined with great enthusiasm!

Fire Hall at 14 Bursthall Street, Marmora, Ontario

Being who I am I wanted more. Since I couldn't fight fires, I'd help save lives through fire prevention and escape education. Since "I am disabled," I ask my Department for help, they gave me the normal way of fire prevention and escape. I wanted to help disabled people learn the proper ways to escape for them. I did my first presentation on fire prevention safety for disabled people for my friends at Four Counties Association. They thought I did such a great Job they ask me to do a session at the Peterborough Inter Urban Brain Injury conference. I also did a presentation in Huntsville in 2006. I had a good time but I have to read from Q – cards so I did not forget anything, I'm leaving a guide for Fire Safety for the Disabled it is 1 page guide summarized from my Presentation, one side for Mobility challenged and the other for Non-mobility challenged to be able to fit on your fridge or bulletin board. I also did a Presentation for my Hastings County Fire Marshal and the Mutual Aid Fire Dept. of Hastings County. This Presentation the Fire Marshal and my fire Chief liked it so much they gave me a promotion to Fire Prevention Assistant for Marmora & Lake Fire Dept. My Fire Chief and I edited the guide so it is a potential Fire Prevention Tool for the Disabled. I love to give people with disabilities Fire Protection Tips. My Computer is my best Friend; I searched for a long time and found these tips for the Disabled.

Click to Read Mike's Fire Safety Tip's!

Call for Presentations

NFPA is accepting proposals for educational presentations at its June 8-11, 2009, Conference & Expo® in Chicago. Share your knowledge with your peers in the field of fire and life safety.

We would particularly like to have more presentations related to fire and life safety for, from, or about, people with disabilities. Submit your proposal online or download a proposal form (PDF, 421 KB). **Proposals are due September 19, 2008.**

In addition, please send a copy of each proposal you submit to Allan B. Fraser, e-ACCESS coordinator at, afraser@nfpa.org so that we can be sure they are correctly tracked.

It's Fire Prevention Week: Prevent Home Fires!

Your home should be a safe haven. But do you regularly check for home fire hazards? If not, there is the potential for danger. Fire departments responded to nearly 400,000 home fires in 2006. That's why the theme of Fire Prevention Week 2008 is ***"It's Fire Prevention Week: Prevent Home Fires!"***

From October 5-11, 2008, fire safety advocates will spread the word to their communities that, with a little extra caution, preventing the leading causes of home fires-cooking, heating, electrical and smoking materials-is within their power. Get more information on our website at *Fire Prevention Week 2008* and *"For People with Disabilities"* .

NFPA seminars on the *Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities*

NFPA will present two more seminars on the "Guide" in September. The seminars are sponsored by the Ohio State Fire Marshal and the Miami University-Ohio.

On September 17, 2008 the NFPA seminar will be presented at main Miami campus in Oxford, Ohio. On September 18, 2008, NFPA will present the seminar at the State Fire Academy in Reynoldsburg, Ohio.

More than 27,000 copies of the free "Guide" have been downloaded since March-2007. The previous seminars have been well received and have been attended by people from a number of foreign countries, as well as the U.S. and Canada.

DOJ Issues Notices to Adopt New ADA Standards

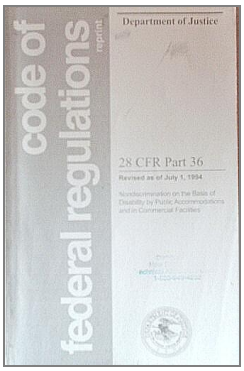
Reprint from: Access Currents

Volume 14, No.3, May/ June 2008

On June 17th, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) issued proposals to adopt new design standards for facilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) based on revised guidelines previously issued by the Board. Under the ADA, DOJ is responsible for maintaining standards for new construction and alterations that are consistent with the Board's guidelines. DOJ's standards apply to the construction and alteration of all facilities covered by the ADA except transportation facilities, which are subject to standards maintained by the Department of Transportation (DOT). The new standards would apply to state and local government facilities subject to title II of the ADA and to places of public accommodation and commercial facilities covered by title III of the law. DOJ issued separate notices under each title.

The notices also address issues relating to the application of the new standards, including effective dates. Through these proposals, DOJ is also revisiting or supplementing other sections of its regulations, which have changed little since their original publication in 1991. New or revised provisions are proposed concerning removal of barriers in existing facilities, accommodation of service animals, maintenance of accessible features, policies and practices governing various services, including hotel reservations, ticket sales and accessible seating, and provision of auxiliary aids, services, and effective communication, including captioning, narrative description, and video interpreting services. The notices, which highlight specific issues in these and other areas where input from the public is sought, are available through the online edition of the Federal Register at: *www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html*. Comments are due by August 18th and can be submitted through the www.regulations.gov website. DOJ plans to hold a public hearing on the notices in Washington, D.C. during the comment period. For further information, contact DOJ at (202) 307-0663 (v/TTY) or visit its website at: *www.ada.gov*.

Current ADA and ABA Standards



DOJ will need to follow-up with a finalized notice after the comment period. In the interim, its existing ADA standards are to be followed until the new standards take effect as established in the final notice. Updated ADA standards issued by DOT are in effect for transportation facilities. In addition, most Federal facilities, including postal facilities, are subject to similar standards adopted by the General Services Administration and the U.S. Postal Service under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA). Military facilities and federally funded housing remain subject to the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS) pending the adoption of new standards by the Department of Defense and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Once these agencies and DOJ implement updated standards, a consistent level of access will be specified for all facilities covered by the ADA or the ABA. Additional information, including links to all relevant regulations and standards, is available on the Board's website at: *www.access-board.gov/ada-aba/standards-update.htm.*

- Standards for ADA Facilities
  - Transportation Facilities: Updated DOT standards
  - State and Local Government Facilities (except transportation): Original ADA standards or UFAS
  - Places of Public Accommodation and Commercial Facilities: Original ADA standards
- Standards for ABA (Federal) Facilities
  - Military and Housing Facilities: UFAS
  - Postal Facilities: Updated USPS standards
  - All Other Federal Facilities: Updated GSA standards

For more news from DOJ:
"Disability Rights online News"

"DARAC" Meeting

NFPA's Disability Access Review and Advisory Committee (DARAC) will meet on September 29th and 30th, 2008, from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. at the:

Kellogg Conference Hotel at Gallaudet University
800 Florida Avenue N.E.
Washington, DC 20002-3695

Items on the committee's agenda include:

- Welcome remarks and an overview of the PWD population
- Updates on:
  - tentative ASTM project and UL efforts
  - NFPA 101 & 5000, 2009 editions, provisions for:
    - Elevators for occupant evacuation prior to phase 1 emergency recall operation
    - Stair descent devices
    - Area of refuge criteria
  - NFPA Public Education Division: - Fire Safety for People with Disabilities Task Force
  - Fire Prevention Week, October 5-11, 2008
  - National Preparedness Month– Kickoff September 18, 2008
  - NFPA's *Emergency Evacuation Guide for People with Disabilities and "Personal Emergency Evacuation Planning Tool for School Students with Disabilities*
  - ICC/ANSI A117.1
  - U.S. Access Board and FEMA efforts with respect emergency transportable housing issues for PWD
  - Review and discussion of the Quarterly Meeting Report: People with Disabilities and Emergency Management, held by the National Council on Disability
  - Discussion of topic suggestions for ANSI-HSSP Workshop – February 3-4, 2009

Evacuation and the ADA: Three Common Oversights

By: Randy W. Dipner – Meeting the Challenge, Inc.

Interestingly, almost everything about facility accessibility in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards for accessible design deals with ensuring that people with disabilities can get **into** and use a building. Relatively little of the standards for accessible design ensure that those same individuals can safely evacuate the building in case of fire or other emergency. And-what little is included is often misunderstood or overlooked. In this article, we will briefly examine three common oversights that can significantly affect evacuation for people who are blind and deaf or hard of hearing, or who use wheelchairs.

Oversight #1: Exit Signs

The ADA standards for accessible design require that all signs designating room numbers, restrooms, and exits include raised letters and Braille to ensure that people who are blind can find their way around the building.

28 CFR Part 36 - ADA Standards for Accessible Design, §4.1.3 (16)(a)

(16) Building Signage:
(a) *Signs which designate permanent rooms and spaces shall comply with 4.30.1, 4.30.4, 4.30.5 and 4.30.6.*

These raised letter and Braille signs are only required if the building provides signs for these elements. That is, if the building does not have room numbers, the ADA does not require that they be added.

If the building has exit signs, raised letter and Braille exit signs are required. Most buildings do have exit signs required by fire code. These are the typical overhead lighted signs. Since these signs are present, additional signs in raised letters and Braille located next to the exit door jamb and centered 60 inches (152 centimeters) above the floor are required.

28 CFR Part 36 - ADA Standards for Accessible Design, §4.30.6

4.30.6 Mounting Location and Height.
Where permanent identification is provided for rooms and spaces, signs shall be installed on the wall adjacent to the latch side of the door. Where there is no wall space to the latch side of the door, including at double leaf doors, signs shall be placed on the nearest adjacent wall. Mounting height shall be 60 in (1525 mm) above the finish floor to the centerline of the sign. Mounting location for such signage shall be so that a person may approach within 3 in (76 mm) of signage without encountering protruding objects or standing within the swing of a door.

As a rule of thumb, wherever overhead signs designate the actual exit from the building or floor, raised letter and Braille signs should be installed. Where overhead signs indicate the path of travel to the exit (that is, where the signs include arrows), raised letter and Braille signs are not required. Research is underway that may find increased value in providing additional way-finding signage for people who are blind beyond the actual exit signs.

Oversight #2: Visual Alarms

The standards for accessible design require that both audible and visual alarms be included if alarm systems are provided.

28 CFR Part 36 - ADA Standards for Accessible Design, §4.1.3(14)

(14) *If emergency warning systems are provided, then they shall include both audible alarms and visual alarms complying with 4.28. Sleeping accommodations required to comply with 9.3 shall have an alarm system complying with*

4.28. Emergency warning systems in medical care facilities may be modified to suit standard health care alarm design practice.

This ensures that people who are deaf or hard of hearing are made aware of an emergency in the building.

The most common mode of installation is to include a visual signal with every audible signal. This is certainly a good start, but it does not meet the minimum requirements of the standards for accessible design. Visual alarms are required in restrooms and any other general-usage areas, such as, meeting rooms, in hallways, in lobbies, and any other area for common use.

28 CFR Part 36 - ADA Standards for Accessible Design, §4.28.1

4.28 Alarms.

4.28.1 General. *Alarm systems required to be accessible by 4.1 shall comply with 4.28. At a minimum, visual signal appliances shall be provided in buildings and facilities in each of the following areas: restrooms and any other general usage areas (e.g., meeting rooms), hallways, lobbies, and any other area for common use.*

Of particular concern are rooms and spaces that may be occupied and have doors. The doors limit the visibility of alarms located in hallways. Thus, a visual signal must be located in such spaces. We commonly find that examining rooms in medical facilities, restrooms, offices, and other such rooms do not have visual alarms.

Oversight #3: Entries & Exits

The standards for accessible design require that at least 50% of all public building entries and at least as many exits required by the applicable building or fire codes be accessible.

28 CFR Part 36 - ADA Standards for Accessible Design, §4.1.3(8)

(8) *In new construction, at a minimum, the requirements in (a) and (b) below shall be satisfied independently:*

(a)(i) *At least 50% of all public entrances (excluding those in (b) below) must be accessible. At least one must be a ground floor entrance. Public entrances are any entrances that are not loading or service entrances.*

(ii) *Accessible entrances must be provided in a number at least equivalent to the number of exits required by the applicable building/fire codes. (This paragraph does not require an increase in the total number of entrances planned for a facility.)*

The standards also require that the same number of accessible means of egress be provided as are required for exits by local building/life safety regulations.

28 CFR Part 36 - ADA Standards for Accessible Design, §4.1.3(9)

(9)* *In buildings or facilities, or portions of buildings or facilities, required to be accessible, accessible means of egress shall be provided in the same number as required for exits by local building/life safety regulations.*
Where a required exit from an occupiable level above or below a level of accessible exit discharge is not accessible, an area of rescue assistance shall be provided on each such level
(in a number equal to that of accessible required exits). Areas of rescue assistance shall comply with 4.3.11. A horizontal exit, meeting the requirements of local building/life safety regulations, shall satisfy the requirement for an area of rescue assistance.

People who use wheelchairs must be able to use these entrances or exits in the case of evacuation.

In many cases, buildings have more emergency exits than are required by the fire codes. In an evacuation, people who use wheelchairs will not seek out those exits that have been designed with accessibility in mind. We believe that in a practical sense, every emergency exit in a building should be accessible, regardless of the specific statement of the standards.

A common problem in facilities is an emergency exit that leads to a small landing with a step down to a sidewalk or a step-off into a grassy area. Unless this area is designed to meet the standards of an area of refuge or area of rescue assistance, people using wheelchairs may be left stranded at the side of the building with no usable means of getting away from the building.

Summary

Clearly there are many other elements that contribute to safe and effective evacuation of buildings by people with disabilities. However, we have found that the three elements discussed here are among the most common problem areas. It is important for us all to be the stewards of accessible evacuation for every person with a disability.

Randy W. Dipner of Meeting the Challenge, Inc. (MTC) provides consulting services to individuals and organizations who must comply with disability laws, including the ADA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Fair Housing Act, and others. MTC is one of 10 federally-funded Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs). The Rocky Mountain DBTAC serves Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, South Dakota, and North Dakota. Randy Dipner is a founding partner of MTC and served as the first director of the Rocky Mountain DBTAC. He served on the Access Board's ADAAG Review Federal Advisory Committee and the Electronic and Information Technology Access Advisory Committee that developed the recommendations for Section 508 accessibility standards. He is also a member of the ANSI A117 task group on dwelling units. For more information on Meeting the Challenge please visit MTC's web site at www.mtc-inc.com or their DBTAC web site at www.ADAinformation.org.

NO ONE LEFT BEHIND!

By Loretta Moore- San Diego Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired

Technology today remedies many of the challenges presented to us throughout everyday life. However, technology can't control all events.

Contemporary society is still faced with disasters, some of which occur in certain geographical locations throughout California. Among these are wildland fires, which still overwhelm firefighters battling them using the best modern day equipment and techniques designed to conquer such fires.

Every aspect of daily life is, or can be, drastically affected when fire becomes a threat, not an asset, and evacuation is a top priority when facing a fire that can quickly consume a community or a city.

Most families, businesses, and individuals are likely to have some type of an evacuation plan in place. Organizations that serve large populations of people with disabilities often face a unique situation when helping to plan for logistics and evacuation options.

Most first responders have never responded to a call that requires knowledge about varying disability groups, which may include persons with vision loss, people who use a wheelchair or walker, and people with cognitive and hearing impairments.

Each of these groups has its specific needs and ways in which they need to communicate. To further complicate matters, many individuals may have multiple disabilities, and assessing their needs and abilities to determine the best mode of evacuation may require some experience. As we learn from recent wild fires in California how improve our planning to better protect ourselves and our communities in the future, perhaps we should also examine how to educate first responders to integrate their plans with the disability community.

When hospitals and convalescent homes, which also serve a wide diverse group of disabled individuals, practice fire drills, the one piece missing is the participation of first responders.

Disability organizations must take the lead in partnering with their police and fire departments and offer training in sensitivity awareness, which will introduce first responders to the integral support systems for various disability communities. These partnerships will also open the door for more education about, and a better understanding of, multiple disability groups.

Incorporating disability education as a part of police and fire recruit training would be a great beginning step.

Nationally, a broader approach has been adopted through the efforts of FEMA, which provides disaster support to states across the nation that have experienced a flood, hurricane, tornado or wildfire. FEMA has an employee who travels across the country educating and informing disability-connected organizations and agencies about their direct support of disability-related issues experienced during a disaster. FEMA will step in and assist states with supplies, temporary housing that is accessible or hands-on support during disaster recovery.

The State of California also employs an individual to network across the state and to investigate best practices involved in serving people with disabilities during times of a disaster.

Perhaps these programs could serve as examples in developing a policy of hiring individuals to promote interaction between national, state, and local entities while building successful recovery plans that include people with disabilities.

In a successful evacuation, no matter what the disaster, the responsibility rests with those who serve people with disabilities, as well as with those who possess a disability. There are disability advocates who stand behind many issues for, and because of, people with disabilities, and they should give serious consideration to the evacuation issue. When presenting this concern to our first responders, we must demonstrate through example, by creating emergency evacuation plans that allow our first responders to take an active role in helping us allow everyone with a disability to safely evacuate or relocate regardless of their mental or physical restrictions.

The San Diego Center for the Blind has a comprehensive rehabilitation training program for blind and vision impaired adults. Since 1972, the agency has been dedicated to promoting independence and self-reliance to these adults throughout San Diego County. The nationally recognized Modular Learning Program provides the steps to freedom by teaching these adults the skills needed for independent living at home and in the community. For more information, visit www.sdcb.org.

Loretta Moore has been with the San Diego Center for the Blind for more than 20 years She is a member of the management team that oversees the functions of the agency. She is the instructor for Activities of Daily Living and the Volunteer Coordinator. She is the Governor's appointee to the State Independent Living Council whose function is to hear the needs and concerns of disabled Californians. She is an appointed member of EPAC (Equipment Program Advisory Committee) under the direction of the California Public Utilities Commission advising the CPUC on equipment to best serve the California Access Telecommunications Program. She is a member of NFPA's Fire Safety for People with Disabilities Task Force advising NFPA's Public Education Division on issues concerning people with

disabilities relative to fire evacuation and education and she is a member of the San Diego Police Chief's committee that regularly helps in handling police matters that involve people with disabilities

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

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

Our goals are to:

- Provide specialized information about fire and life safety for people with disabilities directly to people with disabilities and to those who assist them, that will help reduce or eliminate fire deaths and injuries, as well as those resulting from other emergencies
- Provide a forum for the collection and dissemination of information for people with disabilities in support of DARAC's mission.

Content for future editions will include:

- NFPA-related news
  - DARAC news
  - NFPA codes-and standards-related information
  - Fire safety tips
  - Emergency evacuation information
  - Other
- Articles relating to the safety of people with disabilities from:
  - NFPA staff
  - DARAC members
  - Other national advocates

- General news

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

Editorial calendar, **t**he theme for upcoming editions**:**

- December 2008: residential sprinklers
- March 2009: applicable standards
- June 2009:elevators

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 ***Inaugural Issue- June 2008 by clicking here***