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Allan B. Fraser, Coordinator
NFPA e-ACCESS
afraser@nfpa.org

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The ADA Turned 20, but the Concept Is 2500 Years Old!

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

Over 2500 years ago, Chinese philosopher **Lao-tzu**, (604 BC - 531 BC) said: *“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”*

The concept that has been adapted countless times over the centuries.

In his 1916 pamphlet entitled *The Ten Cannots*, **William John Henry Boetcker** (1873–1962) gave that concept a little twist when he wrote that *“You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they can and should do for themselves.”*

Bill Scott, who is the founder and president of Abilities Unlimited and chair of NFPA’s Disability Access Review and Advisory Committee, believes that, *“All people, regardless of their circumstances, have some obligation to be prepared to take action during an emergency and to assume some responsibility for their own safety.”*

I had an epiphany about disabilities and accessibility many years ago. I was 28 years old and I was going back to work on crutches following knee surgery, the result of a sports injury. I was able to go up the stairs to my second-floor office, but at 5 p.m. that night I found that I had neither the balance nor the strength — or the nerve — to go back down.

Fortunately, the building’s new elevator, one of the capital improvement projects I was responsible for, had been completed three days earlier, and I was able to hobble in and get a ride down. It suddenly occurred to me that for the next few weeks I was going to be a person with a disability.



Allan B. Fraser with cane at City Hall Elevator Dedication 1978

I also realized in that moment that the idea of “disability” isn’t about two groups of people, the able-bodied and those with disabilities. Rather, it’s about each and every one of us. At some point in our lives, we will become

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disabled. Some of us will experience it when we’re young, and some when we’re older. Some will experience it only for a short time, others for much longer. Regardless of the disability—mobility, visual, hearing, speech, or cognitive - the point is that it’s a question of when, rather than if. It’s one of the guiding principles that have shaped my work on disabilities at NFPA.

employment, civil rights, education, healthcare, transportation, housing, telecommunications and technology, international affairs, emergency management, and statistics and data. The themes and content at the NCD event are covered in more detail later in this issue.

come, but to remind us how much work remains.

We can get it done. Working together, with the shared understanding of what it means to have a disability, we can continue to make great progress for all people. None of us wants to find ourselves at the top of the stairs, wondering how to get down.



NCD 2010 Summit in Washington, DC.

In July, I represented NFPA at an important meeting of [The National Council on Disability](#) (NCD). [The National Summit on Disability Policy](#) held from July 25to 28 in Washington, D.C., commemorated the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and brought together more than 47 prominent stakeholders - people with disabilities, as well as federal, community, and private-sector disability experts — to discuss key themes for all people with disabilities to craft policy recommendations for the decade to come. The topics addressed at the summit, the theme of which was “Living, Learning & Earning,” were



NFPA has been inclusive of people with disabilities in its codes, standards, training programs, educational materials, and advocacy initiatives for many years, and we continue to improve and expand our work through the direct input of the disabilities community. With those efforts in mind, and to mark both the occasion of the NCD summit and the anniversary of the ADA, in the July/August 2010 issue of NFPA’s member magazine, [Journal](#)[®], focused on disability issues. As part of the recent issue, we profiled six people whose stories illustrate a range of disabilities issues, and that touch on some of the important programs and steps NFPA has recently taken to address those issues. Their stories are instructive not just to see how far we’ve

Fire Safety and Vision Impairments in a Mobile Society

By *Larry L. Lewis, Jr., President [Flying Blind LLC](#)*



Larry L. Lewis, Jr.

Today’s business professionals lives could be best summed up as fast-paced, ever-changing, and mobile. For business professionals who are affected by a visual impairment, the realities of working in today’s global marketplace are the same as they are for those who have fully functioning vision. I’ve been

blind since birth as a result of cataracts that evolved into a juvenile form of glaucoma which has taken away all of what limited vision that I once had.

Many years ago, I chose a career path that involved lots of travel. I now own my own business, and the travel bug has yet to leave me. I've traveled as much as 20 nights out of town per month, and there's a reoccurring issue that I think about every time I check into a hotel: "What would happen if there were a fire in this building"?

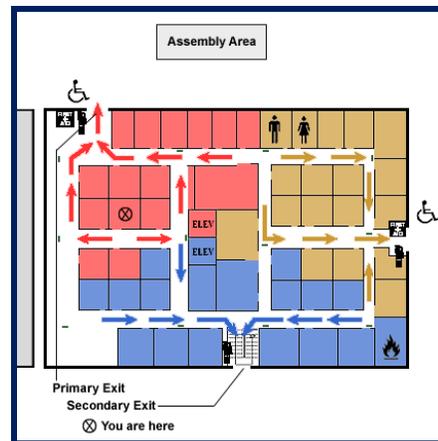
I think of this from the time I check in until I'm situated in my room. We've all seen the TV specials of the ferocity of flames fueled by a spark, synthetic materials, malfunctioning electrical wiring, etc, in a home, place of business, and even a hotel. Yet we rarely discuss the consequences of a fire erupting in a hotel room, the bowels of its basement, or its restaurant's kitchen.

I began thinking of such possibilities about six years ago when I actually slept through a fire alarm in a hotel in Portland, Oregon. That night really shook me up because my colleague was looking for me outside as other sleepy residents emerged into the parking lot out front. I never heard the alarm. Fortunately it was a minor incident that was quickly resolved. But what if it hadn't have been? What if a

full blown fire had ravaged that establishment? Would I have been prepared to react?

There are number of things that I "look at" when I check in to a hotel. They are as follows and are not listed in any particular order of importance. They can be used by everyone, sighted or non-sighted, but they're invaluable to sight impaired travelers, especially when they are traveling alone.

- **Know your location:** When you check in and are assigned the room, ask questions about where the room is in proximity to the nearest fire exit. Make the walk from your room to this exit; check out the stairwells, doorways, etc so that if you need to quickly find the exit while fighting off the cobwebs of a sleepy mind, you can do so without any surprises.



- **Give electrical outlets and appliances the "once over".** I often check the outlets in the

bathroom as well as around my desk to ensure that they are firmly in place without any screws or skewed cover plates. Check the hair dryer, coffee maker, and iron before using them. I was on vacation with my fully sighted wife who took the iron out of our closet to press some clothes and was shocked by the exposed wires hanging out of the back of the iron. Imagine not being able to readily see these wires, plugging in the iron, and filling it with water. The results could be lethal! As a side note, unplug these appliances when you're done using them.

- **Don't smoke in bed.** Many hotels ban cigarettes in their rooms, but some do not. The people who used to live in my current house actually died in a fire in the house when a hapless smoker dropped a lit cigarette as he drifted off to sleep.
- **Try to fall asleep without the aid of a radio or TV.** It won't guarantee that a fire alarm will wake you up, but it will better your odds of you hearing the fire alarm.
- **Have a "Plan B."** Let's assume that fiery hot flames are licking at the walls of the hallway where your room is located. You feel a tremendous amount of heat pouring through your closed door. Opening that door and finding the fire exit is

not an option. So what should you do? Scope out the windows of your room. Locate an item ahead of time that you can use to break the windows if need be. That iron in the closet, the swing of a lamp stand, or a small table might be your only chance of getting some fresh air and perhaps escaping to safety. You risk getting cut up a bit by some shattered, flying glass, but this is still a better option than doing nothing.

- Many hotel's have a small balcony or even a ledge with a railing outside the window that can buy you a lot of time while help is arriving. Knowing about these things could literally save your life.

There are probably more strategies I'm missing, but these are the ones that are currently working for me. Fire is a real and deadly foe. Just because you are tucked away in a safe hotel doesn't mean that fire cannot find a way in. It's up to you to find effective ways to travel safely and enjoy your stay, wherever it may be.

Larry L. Lewis, Jr., has over 15 years of practical experience serving the adaptive technology industry in a variety of capacities including domestic and international product management and sales management for companies that have rich histories in developing speech and Braille solutions for the industry.

Mr. Lewis attributes his successes to Braille literacy, which has enabled him to develop the skill sets necessary to start his own company, a boyhood dream which finally became a reality when he founded [Flying Blind, LLC](#) in May 2006.

WHAT?

Excerpted from *Chronicles of a College Student* by Bonnie Lynn Gracer



Oh, great. I overslept again - Ten minutes until class begins. That alarm clock is just no good. I can't hear it at all. I must find the time to look for a louder one. Well, better hurry now - bathroom, overalls, sweatshirt, contact lenses, hearing aids- oh, wait. Better clean the wax out of the aid's canals. Get a move on, I'm late. Q-tips, ear solution. Have to clean out my ear canals, or they will itch all day. Sit down on the bed. Be careful. I can't hurry with Q-tips in my ears. Oh no five minutes until class. My ears won't dry in five minutes; I won't be able to wear my hearing aids!

Well, I'll have to make do. Put my aids in their little brown case and

carry them to class. Maybe if I run the wind will dry my ears.

Class has begun. I'm three minutes late. One more trip to the bathroom before entering the classroom. Dry out those ears with toilet paper. Smile at someone in the bathroom. What is she saying? Something about the test tomorrow...The echo and the running water in the sink make it impossible to hear, especially with no aids in.

Enter the classroom. People in the back row make room for me, but I push on to the front. If I sit in the back, I won't understand *anything*. Seated, I open my notebook and date the page. Okay, get those aids in. Hey, what's the matter with this one? The volume isn't loud enough! It had better be the battery. I forgot to test the batteries in my rush this morning.

Turn the aid off and on one more time. Try it again. Nope. I'm just going to be frustrated until I can go home and change the battery. I really should carry fresh batteries with me. Try the other aid. Hurry up, the professor is saying something important. Be careful! Almost dropped it. Okay, put the battery in the aid, put the aid in the ear. Oh God. I forgot to turn down the volume before I put the aid in! It's squealing bloody murder.

My friend looks at me wide-eyed from across the room, then tries to muffle her hysterical laughter. That cute guy in the second row is looking at me funny. I’m so embarrassed. The professor, startled, gives me a quick glance and then carries on. I try to turn down the volume and fit the aid properly in my ear. It does not work. The aid simply will not stop whistling. I contemplate sledge hammering it. Amidst stares, I rip out the battery, stuff the aid in my pocket, and shrink in my seat. I cannot understand the lecture, so I take it out and try again. This time there is no whistling, and it works fine. Thank God. Blushing, I make eye contact with my friend, which starts her laughing again.

Okay, sit up, get hold of yourself and listen to the professor. I really wish he wouldn't speak with his coffee cup in front of his mouth. How am I supposed to read his lips? Maybe if I lean to the right the angle will be better. Nope. If I had a rock I'd hit that cup right out of his hand. He starts playing with his mustache. Easily fixable. I'd just shave it off.

A woman in the back row- is saying something. I turn around to see who it is, and where she is seated. After I locate the source of the voice, I try, futilely, to move my eyes around the heads to her lips. I can see her hair and cheek, but her lips are out of sight. Oh

good. The person in front of her moved his head. Now I can see her lips. By this time, however, I have missed most of her question.

The professor responds to her, launching the class into a discussion. He does not repeat the question. I have no idea what is going on. The part of the sentence I missed while trying to locate her had been crucial. The professor asks the class a question that relates to their discussion. No one answers. He looks at me. I squirm in my seat. Do I tell him I have been lost for the past 20 minutes because I did not hear the original question or half of the ensuing dialogue?



Someone across the room answers: Mumble, mumble, coughing in the background mumble, peep. More discussion. Outside, the children at the day-care center squeal with delight. The lawn mower buzzes, and the maintenance people upstairs begin hammering. The fan in our room has been buzzing continually during class. “Mumble, peep process,” from the back of the room. “A *very* important point,”

the professor remarks. “What?” I ask. “Ah hah!” he attacks. “You obviously have not done the reading if you had, you would know what the demystification process was.” Oh, the “demystification” process. Jot that down.

“I know what it means,” I defend myself, “I just didn't hear what was said.” The professor, who knows I have a hearing impairment, looks uncomfortable. Maybe I should have been clearer and asked, “*What* process?”

Mumble, mumble continues the class. My first hearing aid is really annoying me. I keep trying to turn up the volume, but it is up as far as it will go. I begin to fume; tears form in my eyes. I can't wait to go home and change the battery that is, if the problem is the battery.

My friend runs up after class, still laughing about my squealing aid. I laugh too, in spite of my fuming insides. After all, it was pretty funny. “But what an amazing class,” she says, in awe of the professor. She totally missed my little incident with him. “Yeah, amazing,” I say, not very enthusiastically. An amazing exercise in self-control. Clearly I missed the part of the class she was so excited about. I envy her luxury of being able to concentrate fully on the course content, instead of on twisting her body into good lip reading positions.

Back in my room, I test the hearing aid's battery. Hopefully, a new battery will fix the aid. The battery is fine. Try a new one, just in case. A *bit* better, but not much. Great. Now I will have to send it back to the manufacturer which will mean two weeks with only one aid (the spare aids never work while the others are broken, Murphy's Law), a cost of \$10.75 to express mail them (which speeds up the delivery process), and, at best, a 10 percent likelihood that when they come back they will work. Hmm, maybe I should just use them as they are and deal with the frustration. I go to the lounge on my floor where people are studying.



I take out my hearing aids since they are making my ears sweat and begin to study for my test. Presently, someone I have an incredible crush on comes into the lounge and begins whispering to me. Smiling, I shake my head no, hold up a finger, and whisper that I cannot hear whispers. He watches while I frantically put on my hearing aids. I'm so embarrassed. What is he thinking? Will my aids scare him away? I understand him better with my aids, but I still have to strain, so we go out into the hall. There we talk for a while, and then hug goodbye. Guess he

wasn't scared off. The contact makes my aids squeal loudly. I want to tell him that the squealing means he turns me on, but I don't. Instead, I explain what the noise is; he apologizes and backs away. I smile and tell him not to worry about it. Then we say goodbye, and I slink back into the lounge.

Soon a crowd of people walks past the lounge, talking loudly and making a lot of noise. Disturbed, I look up and then resume my reading. After about eight seconds, my friend looks at me funny and says angrily, "Bonnie!" I look up. "Yes?" "Bonnie, the fire alarm is ringing!" "It is?!" "Yes! Don't you hear it? Didn't you wonder why everyone was leaving?" Quickly I drop my book, put on my hearing aids, and hurry outside. If I listen hard, I can hear a low, soft vibration. Wow. I had not heard the ringing *at all*. And this is during the *daytime*, when I am awake and alert! Late last night my roommate had woken me up - I had slept through *five* rings of the fire alarm. This is getting scary! What will I do next year when I have a room by myself? Will it ever be safe for me to live alone? My roommate had planned to go away last night. It was a good thing she hadn't.



Later that day I go to my residence hall director and ask if she will knock on my door whenever the fire alarm goes off or if she could have the fire department do it. I tell her I feel funny asking for this, because I *never* use my hearing loss to get special treatment. But this, I say, is literally a matter of life and deaf death. She laughs, insinuating I am asking for special treatment, tells me she is very busy during fire drills, and suggests I have my friends knock on my door. I leave her apartment wondering what she plans to tell my mother when I burn to death.

Falling asleep that evening, I think how strange it is that I, a healthy, 20 year old varsity athlete, am so completely exhausted by 9 p.m. every night, while my peers remain energized all evening. I marvel at the isolation of my experience. I think there is *one* other student in this university with a hearing loss, and I don't even know her yet. In my whole *life*, I have known only two peers with the same disability as me.



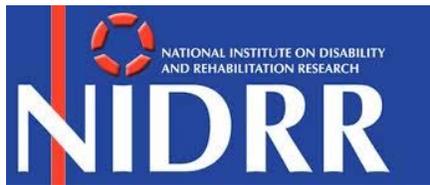
'I thought my grandfather was really modern until I found out what I thought was a Bluetooth headset was really a hearing aid.'

I think wistfully of the various groups of oppressed people on campus, such as women and people of color. They have support groups, and friends and professors who share their feelings. Our school even has academic departments devoted to their experiences. On such a socially aware and politically active campus, I feel surprisingly invisible and unique. To this day, I am not aware of any support groups for people with hearing impairments - on or off campus. I would love to start one, but where would I find the members?

Groggy, I store my thoughts and try to get some sleep. I'll be down one hearing aid tomorrow, gonna be a tough day. Those broken aids have to get fixed again. Sure hope the construction workers won't be hammering during class. Maybe the dean can help with that. She's nice, but I don't understand one thing. Why does she keep asking if I know sign language? Why would I know sign language? No one's ever mentioned it before. What does sign language have to

do with anything? I just have a little trouble hearing. So what? I'm not deaf.

Note: The entire essay was completed in May 1986 and submitted for a university sociology class. Bonnie Lynn Gracer is currently program officer at US Department of Education, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research



Fire Prevention Week 2010



“Smoke Alarms: A Sound You Can Live With!” is NFPA’s official theme for [Fire Prevention Week \(FPW\), October 3-9](#). If you wonder why NFPA, the official sponsor of FPW for nearly 90 years, is focusing on smoke alarms when most homes already have at least one, you've come to the right place! This year's campaign is designed to educate people about the importance of smoke alarms and encourage everyone to take the steps necessary to update and maintain their home smoke alarm protection.



In the September, 2009 issue of [e-ACCESS](#) we reported that RESNA had initiated a project to develop an ANSI standard for emergency stair travel devices for individuals with disabilities.

That RESNA committee has met monthly since February 2010 and is making good progress.

In a related project, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Fire Prevention and Safety Grants, Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program has awarded a grant to a joint venture between the University of Illinois at Chicago and Ohio State University to research and report on stair descent device (SDD) performance for firefighters.

As firefighters evacuate individuals with disabilities from high-rises, stair descent device designs, building layout, and emergency conditions put them at risk for injury or a cardiac event. Project SDD will provide quantitative data on the demands made on firefighters as they use SDDs and on device performance over time so that the devices are operational when needed.

[NFPA's Fire Protection Research Foundation](#) will provide support to the project by administering the project technical panel and dissemination of the project results in the NFPA community.

We are very excited and pleased about the increasing activities in the area of emergency evacuation for people with disabilities and look forward to the completion of work by both groups.

NFPA's Disability Access Review and Advisory Committee

DARAC held its most recent meeting at the Luxor Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, on June 5 and 6, 2010 with 16 members and guests in attendance.



DARAC Members on the left: Chair Bill Scott, Tom Norton, Marsha Mazz, Steve Spinetto and Richard Skaff.

The committee discussed NFPA's website with Mike Hazel and made a number of suggestions for potential actions and activities that NFPA might consider to help expand NFPA/DARAC outreach and

involvement with the disability community.



DARAC members, from left: Rocky Burks, Steve Spinetto and Marsha Mazz.

The committee also suggested NFPA explore running programs through and establishing mutual links with:

- State fire marshals
- US Department of Education
- State Departments of Education
- AARP (through D.C. office)



From left, DARAC member Rocky Burks, and guests Mike May, Bruce Fraser and Jeff Knight.

The committee would like to do something more pro-active for the 2011 Conference & Expo in Boston. More details will be announced in future issues of [e-ACCESS](#).



Justice Department Updates ADA Regulations and Standards

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) released updated Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations and standards on July 26, the 20th anniversary of the law's enactment. The rules update requirements for state and local governments covered by title II of the ADA and those for private sector entities subject to Title III. President Barack Obama announced the release along with other administrative initiatives to promote equality for people with disabilities at a ceremony on the south lawn of the White House celebrating the ADA's anniversary.

"Today, the Department of Justice is publishing two new rules prohibiting disability-based discrimination," the President noted, "and beginning 18 months from now, all new buildings must be constructed in a way that's compliant with the new 2010 standards."

The DOJ regulations update ADA standards governing the construction and alteration of facilities covered by the ADA, including places of public accommodation, commercial facilities, and state and local government facilities. The new standards are based on revised minimum [guidelines](#) previously established by the Access Board that include supplements for certain types of facilities and sites not addressed before. "For the very first time, these rules will cover recreational facilities like amusement parks and marinas and gyms and golf facilities and swimming pools, and municipal facilities like courtrooms and prisons," Obama stated.

DOJ's regulations allow covered entities the choice of following either the updated standards or the original standards during the first 18 months. After this period, use of the 2010 standards will become mandatory. In setting the effective dates, DOJ sought to allow sufficient time for transitioning to the updated standards so as not to disrupt design and construction projects already underway. DOJ's new rules also revise or supplement other sections of its ADA regulations, including those covering existing facilities, service animals, policies and programs, maintenance of accessible features, auxiliary aids and services, and effective communication. The new rules

and additional information are available on DOJ's [ADA website](#).

DOJ also initiated new [rulemaking](#) under the ADA to address access to websites, movie theaters, next generation 911 emergency services, and equipment and furniture. In addition, President Obama noted other initiatives to advance equal opportunity for people with disabilities. These include a new executive order establishing the federal government as a model employer of individuals with disabilities; expansion of broadband internet access; creation of new disability offices at the State Department, the Department of Transportation, and Federal Emergency Management Agency; the U.S. signing of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and efforts to improve independent living.

circumstances and high-risk demographics attended several sessions aimed at addressing their common concerns.

Fire safety for people with disabilities often requires creative solutions or approaches. An open forum gave chief officers the opportunity to share and learn from others.

The forum started with a presentation by Chief Larry Donner of the Boulder Colorado Fire Department followed by a presentation by Allan Fraser, Senior Building Code Specialist with the NFPA focusing on fire safety for students with disabilities.

The presentations were followed by an open discussion with attendees asking questions and sharing their thoughts and practices when it comes to fire safety for the tens of thousands of students with a range of disabilities now attending colleges and universities.



College Community Fire Chief Forum

At the FRI 2010 Conference sponsored by the International Association of Fire Chiefs in Chicago August 24-28, 2010, fire chiefs with colleges and universities in their communities who are faced with unique



What does it mean to be a NPM Coalition Member?

By joining the Coalition, your organization would agree to promote emergency preparedness in any way that it can during September.

National Preparedness Month 2010

What is National Preparedness Month (NPM)?

[September is National Preparedness Month!](#) This awareness month is sponsored by the Ready Campaign in partnership with Citizen Corps and the Ad Council. NPM is designed to encourage Americans to take simple steps to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses, and communities.

How do I register my organization?

You can register to become a NPM Coalition Member by visiting <http://ready.adcouncil.org>.

In the past have been as many as 3,200 NPM Coalition Members who worked to create a culture of preparedness in the United States. We hope your organization will join us in spreading this emergency preparedness message in 2010!

Who can sign up to be an NPM Coalition Member?

NPM Coalition membership is open to all public and private sector organizations at no cost.

What do I get for being a Coalition Member?

Once you register you will receive access to the NPM Website where you can find a toolkit that includes templates, resources, and tips to assist you with promoting emergency preparedness. You will also find an NPM calendar where you can post your events and see what other organizations are doing in your community. In addition, you can share your success stories and read about the successes of others.

Your organization will also be listed on their Web site! NFPA is there. Won't you help get others prepared too?



[World Standards Day](#) began as a celebration of the birth of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), which held its first meeting in London on October 14, 1946. From an initial roster of 25 countries, ISO (based in Geneva, Switzerland) now has 123 member nations and has evolved into the global clearinghouse for all standards activities. ISO's U.S. representative, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), is one of the founding organizations of World Standards Day. Today, World Standards Day is sponsored annually by ISO; the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), which develops international standards for the electrical

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and electronics industries; and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), an international organization responsible for the coordination, development, regulation, and standardization of telecommunications standards.

The goal of World Standards Day is to raise awareness of the importance of global standardization to the world economy and to promote its role in helping meet the needs of business, industry, government, and consumers worldwide. The international event pays tribute to the thousands of volunteers around the world who participate in standardization activities. Since its initial celebration in 1970, member countries commemorate World Standards Day by organizing special gatherings and events, ranging from conferences, exhibitions, and seminars to film shows, TV and radio interviews, and full "standards weeks" around mid October.

Each fall in Washington, DC, members of the U.S. standardization community gather with other leaders in business, industry and government for a U.S. World Standards Day exhibit, reception and dinner gala. During the dinner ceremony the [Ronald Brown Standards Leadership Award](#) is presented to an individual who has demonstrated leadership in promoting the important role of standardization in

eliminating global barriers to trade. Awards are also presented to the winners of the [World Standards Day Paper Competition](#), which is designed to raise awareness of the importance of standards, as well as present various perspectives on national and international standards and conformity assessment issues.



Standards Engineering Society Logo

This year, the U.S. Celebration of World Standards Day – ***Standards for Accessibility*** – will recognize the critical role of model codes, standards, and conformity assessment activities in developing and maintaining the built environment, products, technologies, and systems that are accessible for persons with special needs.

Twenty years ago, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) was enacted, fundamentally changing and improving the way that many Americans access the built environment, transportation, communication, and information technology. Today the ADA – together

with the many different abilities and needs of people across the country – has led to a myriad of accessibility-related requirements and solutions in every industry. From technologies that are user-friendly for the deaf and blind communities, to physical environments that are accessible to persons with physical disabilities, to products that can be easily used by the elderly, today's accessibility solutions allow for the greatest number of people to enjoy many aspects of everyday life that may otherwise be unmanageable.



Marsha K. Mazz, Senior Accessibility Specialist and Technical Assistance Coordinator for the [United States Access Board](#), has been selected by the U.S. Celebration of World Standards Day Planning Committee as the 2010 recipient of the prestigious Ronald H. Brown Standards Leadership Award. She will be honored by members of the U.S. standardization community on Thursday, September 23, 2010, at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington, DC.

Named for the late U.S. Secretary of Commerce, the Brown

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award recognizes demonstrated leadership in promoting the important role of standardization in eliminating global barriers to trade. The award is presented at the [U.S. Celebration of World Standards Day](#), an annual event which honors the U.S. standardization and conformity assessment community and recognizes its efforts to promote American competitiveness in a global marketplace, safeguard the environment, and improve the quality of life for workers and consumers around the world. The theme for this year's event, *Standards for Accessibility*, will recognize the critical role of model codes, standards, and conformity assessment activities in developing and maintaining the built environment, products, technologies, and systems that are accessible for persons with special needs.

Ms. Mazz was nominated by the [National Fire Protection Association](#) (NFPA) for her outstanding contributions to the use of standardization to improve access for persons with disabilities to structures worldwide, including office buildings, stadia, train and subway stations, cruise ships, recreational vehicles, manufactured housing, airport terminals, and courthouses. At the U.S. Access Board she is responsible for the continued development of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines, overseeing the

technical assistance program for the ADA and the Architectural Barriers Act (ADA-ABA), and representing the Access Board to the model code organizations.

She has been a key catalyst of the intensive work over the last two decades to coordinate and harmonize federal criteria for accessibility. This has resulted in a largely harmonized group of rules among the ADA-ABA; federal fair housing guidelines; the International Building Code; NFPA 5000, *Building Construction and Safety Code*; and ICC/ANSI A117.1, *Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities*.

NFPA participates in the National Summit on Disability Policy

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

I was in Washington, D.C. the last week of July for the [National Summit on Disability Policy](#), sponsored by the [National Council on Disability](#). The event was designed to do two primary things: commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and to hammer out disability policy recommendations for the decade to come.



As with any event of this magnitude and importance, the range of subjects and policies was expansive. I had the opportunity to speak with a number of attendees during the four days of the summit, and we agreed that while perhaps more time could have been spent on ways to move disability policy forward, valuable lessons and ideas were nevertheless uncovered regarding where we are and where we need to go.



The full name of the event offered a lot of appeal for attendees: "National Summit on Disability Policy 2010: ADA 1990-2010 Retrospective and Future Policy Directions - A comprehensive dialogue to shape the

national disability agenda." There were more than 475 attendees, representing an incredibly wide range of interests and experiences, not to mention 48 states and the whole spectrum of disabilities. The formal program began on Monday, July 26, with hundreds of attendees applauding the opening ceremony that included the U.S. Marine Color Guard and Band playing the national anthem. In his opening remarks, NCD Chair Jonathan Young said that the dialogue and recommendations of what we all need to do for, and within, the disability community to address inclusiveness in all aspects of society have been on the table since 1996. This summit isn't necessarily about generating new recommendations on what to do, he told the crowd; we know what to do. Now it's time to decide how we get them done.

Other speakers that first day provided overviews on national and international issues such as the "Community Choice Act" that's before Congress, and proposed accessibility regulations for the Internet to assure that both delivery systems and content are accessible to those with all forms of disabilities. An overview of the new healthcare legislation and regulations with respect to people with disabilities was outlined, noting that no child can be denied coverage due to disabilities and must be covered until they are 26 years

old. Furthermore, beginning in 2014, no one with a disability will be denied healthcare coverage, even for pre-existing conditions.



The summit had been designed a year ago to have working discussions to generate directions and plans-the "how we get them done" part of Jonathan Young's message-in 10 specific tracks. A consulting firm had been retained by NCD to help handle not only the summit's logistics, but to develop a set of 10 working papers to provide background information for the key topics folded into the three broad pillars of "Living, Learning, and Earning," which was the theme for the event. The 10 working papers addressed civil rights, healthcare, education, employment, housing, transportation, technology, emergency management, statistics and data, and international affairs.



The break-out group discussions were not directly tied to the original ten topic tracks; many of our discussions instead focused on inclusiveness from a number of different perspectives including, but not limited to, community, universal design, and life-long learning. In a broader sense, much of the summit was devoted to recounting past accomplishments rather than charting a way forward. Even so, there were many opportunities to discuss emerging topics and subjects that will impact us in the not-too-distant future-such as the specific inclusion of provisions for people with disabilities in all types of codes and standards related to buildings, including one- and two-family dwellings, as well as in codes and standards governing notification devices and operations-and I came away with a lot of invaluable information and ideas from not only the group discussions but also from the off-line and after-hours discussions I had with many attendees. The many new contacts I made will allow NFPA to further collaborate with other groups on an array of ideas and programs relating to NFPA's codes, standards, public education programs, and products for fire and life safety. As NFPA continues to be aware of, sensitive to, and inclusive of people with disabilities, we must make sure that our codes, standards and programs do not inhibit the "Living, Learning, and Earning" vision of the NCD.

NFPA's Public Education Division News

In April the NFPA's Public Education Division, Fire Safety for People with Disabilities Task Force met in Phoenix, Arizona. Topics discussed included the effectiveness of social media for people with disabilities, physical disability as a factor in home fire deaths, and the latest materials produced by the public education division, including "[I Know My Fire Safety Plan](#)," a fire safety social story for high-functioning children with autism.



The Fire Safety for People with Disabilities Task Force. NFPA Public Education Project Manager Lisa Braxton (left) is the staff liaison.



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 assist them to help reduce or eliminate fire deaths and injuries, as well as those resulting from other emergencies, and
- 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.](#)

