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COMPETITIVE DIVISION – PRACTITIONER

Confronting Building Evacuation Challenges for Wheelchair Users

The challenges of providing consistent and reasonable plans for evacuating people with mobility challenges from the non-ground floors of buildings have been existent for a long time. Recently and fortunately, there has been some attention given to this area with more legal requirements for the inclusion of DAFN issues in an institution's Emergency Operations Plans. However, nearly every plan I found was either too vague, too simplified, or too narrowly focused to be useful to a large range of needs for the DAFN population.

This poster is divided into two areas: One is an overview of the findings of several emergency operations plans, their evacuation plans with regards to the mobility challenges populations and their shortcomings. Many of these plans are constructed in good faith and intent to address this issue. However, there is often a single solution which is not always a poor one, but in itself has many problems associated with it.

The other area of this poster provides suggestions and programs that could be enacted to give a realistic assessment of options, especially when it comes to the simultaneous evacuation of the wheelchair itself. Wheelchairs are often integral to the person's quality of life, and can be very expensive, so the chair evacuation itself becomes nearly as critical as the evacuation of the person.

There is more work to be done on this issue, but this presentation provides a meaningful starting point for any type of organization to move forward in this very important part of every institution's Emergency Management Program.

PRESENTATION THEME:

Building Evacuation Challenges for the Disabled, Access and Functional Needs (DAFN) Population

COLLABORATORS:

California State University, Fullerton, Office of Disabled Support Services; Orange County Emergency Management Organization Disabled, Access and Functional Needs Subcommittee; Dayle McIntosh Center