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Changing a Legacy of Ableism: Best Practices for Accessible Emergency Management

Representing one of the largest marginalized communities, there are approximately one billion people with disabilities (PwD) worldwide and approximately 70 million PwD in the United States. Nevertheless, PwD continue to experience discrimination and disparate outcomes during emergencies and disasters, with some experts estimating PwD are up to four times more likely to experience injury or death compared to non-disabled people. As recently as 2024, regulatory, academic, and healthcare organizations continue to identify this disparity as a core issue undermining societal progress. However, the inconsistent knowledge and uneven application of best practices for accessibility has resulted in minimal improvement despite decades of evidence showing PwD continue to be systematically disadvantaged by common emergency management methodology. Healthcare emergency management is well positioned as a change agent, since the specialty serves a population with higher prevalence of disability - both temporary and permanent - compared to the general population. To date, there have been limited attempts to consolidate the knowledge of accessibility in healthcare emergency management. Through a review of after-action reports from major US disasters, this research identifies best practices in healthcare emergency

management accessibility and transposes these lessons within the broader context of emergency management, fostering positive change throughout the entire discipline.

Presentation Theme: The theme of this presentation is leveraging findings from healthcare emergency management to establish emergency management practice recommendations for improved accessibility.

Collaborators, Advisor(s) and Department(s) that assisted with this research: Department of Emergency Management and Enterprise Resilience at NYU Langone Health.