

## NDRN-Fire Safety Showcase

Good afternoon. Thank you so much for joining. Welcome to the fire safety project showcase. We appreciate you all so much for joining us as we spotlight the fabulous and phenomenal work that has been done by the protection and advocacy agencies from across the country of which there were five that received small project based funding to embark on creative and innovative projects that centered the safety, dignity and rights of people with disabilities as it relates to fire safety. I'm so happy to hear our national partners on the line. And a few folks from the nation state fire marshals and the biggest supporters and members of the protection and advocacy agencies from across the nation and throughout the territories. We are so happy have you here as we celebrate and walk through some of the work that has been done by the Native American disability law center, the Georgia advocacy office, the disability law center of Alaska. The American Samoa protection and advocacy agency as well as disability rights California. And that is all I am perhaps going to say at this particular moment because right now we want to push as much time and energy towards the individuals who we are here to spotlight and that is, of course, all of the wonderful organizations that I have just named.

With giving that introduction, I'm going to ask Charles, our wonderful IT director get that first slide deck queued up as we move into the meat of our meal here today. They will talk you through the successes and challenges and the real work they did around disability inclusive fire safety. So without further adieu, I'm going to push it over to our very first group of presenters and they are the folks coming to us from the Native American disability law center. So folks, passing it over to you.

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Benita Mc Kerry. I'm the intake and outreach specialist with the Native American disability law center. I have my colleague with me also, Mr. Mr. Hoskey, government liaison. He and I will do the presentation.

This is the area that we focus on. The law center's mission is to advocate so the rights of Native Americans with disabilities in the four corners area are enforced, strengthened and brought in harmony with their communities. The Native American disability law center provides service in the four corners region. Navajo is one of the largest tribes we serve. The Navajo reservation is spread out over parts of the three states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. And a little bit of Colorado as you can see on the map in southern Ute. It's the largest reservation in the country with 227,425 square feet miles. That's 33,000 plus people on the Navajo Nation that they call home. The other tribes the law center serves is the Hopi Tribe and the hob Hopi Tribe -- Hopi Tribe is in the middle of the Navajo Nation. The reservation is surrounded by the Navajo Nation and as I mentioned we also serve the Ute Mountain and southern Ute.

>> Thank you, can you hear me? My name is Hoskie, I'm visually impaired. And I'm the government -- the community government liaison for the Native American disability law center. Our project is fire safety and prevention. And one of the reasons why we undertook this project is 60% of Navajos houses or residents have wood stoves in them. And you can see that it's a big fire hazard. The only place you will probably find a gas furnace and places like that is in housing areas. When Navajo Nation is pretty spread out even the residences are pretty much spread out.

The stoves they have in most stoves are old stoves, inefficient and ventilation is a real problem. And most of the time these communities even though they have fire stations, but they are miles away when there is a fire, people call in and you don't expect a fire truck right away. Most cases the Navajo Nation has its own fire department but the county and the city sometimes have to kick in because they are closer.

Most houses do not have smoke detectors or fire extinguishers. People with disabilities have fixed incomes and most cases they can't afford those so it's very rare a fire extinguishers and smoke detectors in people's homes.

>> Charles, next slide.

>> This picture here is the group that we were at San Juan chapter. Chapter houses are community centers throughout the Navajo Nation and where communities meet to plan and to

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come together on behalf of the community issues. And this one we are sitting at San Juan chapter under a shade and we are waiting for people to show up. There is Anne and she is with IHS, Benita, Valarie and myself with the law center. So we are sitting there waiting for people to show up.

In our effort we begin to talk about what we are doing with this project, and IHS Indian health services, injury prevention department got interested in it and that's -- and that's why Anne is in that picture and she is there to help us and they also IHS and Johns Hopkins University work very closely together and Johns Hopkins University is developing a guide for fire safety for Indian country. When they heard what we were doing they came to the conclusion or the realization that they didn't have a chapter on fire safety for individuals with disabilities. So they are still working on that guide and so that's going to be an added chapter to the project that we are doing.

We have the certified professional who was actually a couple of fire stations here in this area and is very knowledgeable about fire safety and also a community member.

And we had to get involved with the chapter managers. We went to two chapters and one chapter, Ship Rock chapter. The chapter managers were very helpful and let us use their facilities to contribute these fire extinguishers and to provide information on fire safety and how to use a fire extinguisher.

The next slide, like I was saying, we originally started out with four chapters and we went back down to two chapters. What we did was had to do drive-bys. So we advertised through our Facebook for the law center and we are connected to a number of disability organizations. So when we sent it to them and they were able to send it out to their clients. Also, we used the local radio station and also another station that is nationwide we sent them a PSA and they also announced that for us.

Then we have a list of clients on the e-mail and asked them to share the flier that was on their Facebook. And a number of other agencies got involved and were getting the word out for us. And also political leaders have a Navajo tribal council is very interested in disability and is very popular so she was able to -- she was willing to get the information out on her Facebook.

On September 3 we did the first chapter and it was the San Juan chapter. Nobody showed up and the reason why is the Navajo Nation President at that time due to the delta variants put out that there is no -- there is to be no gatherings. And that basically shut down everything and it was uncontrolled delta virus through the Navajo Nation. These were precautions. Based on that we decided to go through and do it by drive-by. At this particular chapter house we didn't get anybody coming by.

Then September 17 we did another one at Ship Rock chapter. And we had 12 community members come by and they were given fire safety information and how to operate the fire extinguishers and also were given written information on the operation of that.

And then our program has a program for elders benefit enrollment center called Benita's, one of her projects. One of her advocates. 70% of our Navajo elders, over 65, 78% have a disability. So based on that our advocate found out that the chapter they were having an elderly event and it was a Christmas event and were giving out Christmas items to these elders. So it was a drive through event also so she went up there and after they received their Christmas bags, then she approached them and was able to distribute 30 more fire extinguishers.

Next slide, Valarie is her name and she is the advocate for the program. And what we did is because of the variants and not getting so much success, we decided that we would advertise again and we will have them come to the office and pick up fire extinguishers. And we asked them to call in ahead of time and this is what Valarie is doing there. In the picture she is in the office distributing fire extinguishers. And some of the outcomes we had out of this, we had 71 face-to-face contacts. In other words, people were interested or they came by to pick up a fire

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extinguisher or have questions. We had 71 come by seeking the information. All together 74 fire extinguishers were distributed through this whole project. And 15 of them said they had fire extinguishers and were outdated so they were happy to get a new one.

Out of the ones that we served that were provided fire extinguishers, two we came in contact with, 15 were referred out to other fire professionals that could do stove inspections or being able to provide more information on wood stoves and how to use them and the safety of it.

Out of this, we identified two agencies one was red feather development group. They were out of Flagstaff. And I just happened to be talking to one of my friends and then I found out they worked for red feather and they were telling me they were out of Flagstaff and they could do inspections and cleanings on stoves and as far as the stove pipes going up through the chimney, we had a gentleman call and he was worried about his stove pipe. He wasn't sure if it was safe or not safe. He was referred to red feather and there was a couple of other people. They wanted us to do was really just to give them the information where they can call and seek the information and what they needed and then red feather will deal with them. And so we gave them the phone number to call or to e-mail most of that also on Facebook.

Another group that we came in contact with was the family wishes. And they were in our local area and they had discontinued what they were doing, the services they were doing for two years because of the pandemic. They just opened again recently and sent us a flier. What they were offering was a change of the old stove they had to exchange it for a BPA certified stove and it would be free. And also an application process so we were able to put that on our Facebook and send it out and for them to apply and so that was a real valuable resource that we came up with where stoves were being given out and installed and inspected. So that's the second one that we came up with.

So basically that's what our project was about. Thank you.

>> Thank you so much, I appreciate it. My goodness. So much wonderful work coming from the Native American disability law center. Everybody getting extinguishers for Christmas, who came through? And you giving drive-byes a whole new concept in terms of finding innovative ways to reach out and engage with the community even when you were side tracked a little bit by the Omicron and delta variants that pushed your initiatives and ideas off to the side a bit and slowed you down. Congratulations on a phenomenal work that you guys have done.

If you are just joining, we are spotlighting the work of five phenomenal agencies as well as the U.S. territory that are highlighting their disability inclusive fire safety ishive ins that took place during the fall of 2021. To be mindful of time I will push it on over to Georgia, each of our groups are taking ten minutes to present because we want to make sure that we have time at the end for people to ask questions. So without further adieu, Georgia, over to you.

>> Hi, everyone. My name is Catherine Register-Riggle. I'm the payee director at Georgia advocacy office. And I worked with Denise Quigley, our resource advocacy director to work on our grant.

So Georgia advocacy works collaboratively with the Georgia emergency prepared rns coalition for individuals with disabilities and older adults as well as local fire departments and the red cross to address statewide emergency relief and prevention to include fire safety, resource development and response to natural disasters. Georgia -- we call ourselves GAO for short but that gets confused with another fed agency.

GAO took a lead role during the resettlement of over 100,000 people during the Hurricane Katrina episode that occurred roughly 13 years ago, I think. From that we were able to build several resources that included the Georgia emergency preparedness coalition as well as some significant ties with the Red Cross and local fire departments. In using those resources, that is what we did with the grant in regards to education and in regards to planning.

So our goals for the grant was to work with the City of Decatur fire department to provide

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training and support to self-advocates, family members and direct support professionals. And then to also work with the Georgia emergency preparedness coalition to provide a train the trainer presentation to agencies and support systems to aid in the development of individual emergency plans. So we had kind of a two-prong thing going on. We had specific trainings that were set up for folks that were self-advocates and direct support professionals working directly with people with disabilities and then we also had with the coalition a train the trainer kind of training in order to provide some resources to families and to provider agencies that are working with folks in order to help them develop individual emergency plans. We also used it to purchase a certified refurbished stryker model 6254 evacuation chair. The Georgia advocacy hosts numerous organizations within our office and most of this was prior to COVID and we are hoping that continues in this new year. Some of those examples include self-advocates being empowered or SABE. People first Georgia, independent living centers, the Georgia council on developmental disabilities as well as numerous others. Not to mention that we have several folks that work within our office. We are on the sixth floor of the building that we are in and we do need additional supports in order to make sure anyone who utilizes a wheelchair would be able to get out safely and the stryker stair chair was the best means to be able to do that. That purchase also allows the City of Decatur fire department to use that chair for training with other businesses and certainly for other folks in the building that may need access to that chair.

The fire safety and prevention with Decatur fire department was done in conjunction with the assistant chief and that Ninetta Violante. And she assisted us and provided the actual presentation to numerous folks that we came in contact with through self-advocates -- that's a good question. I'm sorry, I'm going to go quickly how many people in the GAO office building were trained in using the stryker chair? We do have two people in the building that are trained to use the stryker chair, however, we plan to once we -- we are still not back in the office full time and once we get back into the office on a more consistent basis then the City of Decatur was going to come in and assist us with that training.

Back to the training we did with the assistant chief with the City of Decatur fire rescue, she actually provided training to include what are some absolute resources that were in specifically the City of Decatur and what would be consistent as well throughout other parts of the city. Includes people with disabilities and older adults. 31% of the residents in the City of Decatur are people of color and 12% are older adults over 65. There are 27 apartment and condo complexes that are considered mid- to high-rises in the City of Decatur with an additional eight housing locations specific to people over 65 and/or residents with disabilities. Decatur emphasizing -- in its next strategic plan per the planning and zoning department which will appeal to an intersectional population of people with disabilities and others on a limited income. So we felt like this training would provide those folks that may be in a situation where they are in an environment that is less than the most comprehensive safety regulations in place. It will allow them additional resources.

So the points of that training included common causes of fires, fire prevention resources available to folks and question and answer session. We got some really, really good questions and a lot of really good feedback from folks on the fact that resources were unknown prior to this training. And that it was helpful to know how to plan for these items. We also had some really good conversation with folks who are self-advocates and have limited support systems in their home on what type of things are common causes of fires and how to prevent those.

The get ready tool kit train the trainer workshop was provided free of charge and it was done with the Georgia emergency preparedness coalition. Those include members from multiple entities within the community that includes the red cross and it includes different entities that provides support and assistance with folks. They also -- it also -- sorry about that. They also are supportive of assuring that information has gotten to all parts of the state when there is an

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emergency that is -- a weather emergency of some kind. They also include -- sorry I've got my date in my notes under here.

It was presented to supporters to train direct care staff, families and self-advocates to present to others. So this training was specifically put in place in order for the folks part of the workshop to take it to whatever their organization is or in their community to actually train others on how to come up with a household disaster plan specifically. It included the get ready tool kit instructions which gave detailed information as far as how to prepare for a disaster plan. What a disaster plan looks like itself. And then the check list for folks to go through to determine what they need in order to make that disaster plan successful.

This is a stryker model evacuation chair. I'm super excited because I was not one of the folks trained on it and I'm super excited to figure out how best to work it. I think it does -- if I'm correct, it does take two people to operate the model chair and it is intended that fire department professionals or fire safety professionals will be those that are used to utilize the chair in order to assist folks getting out of the building in a safe manner. The hallways we have in place in our building allows -- is considered fireproof for up to two hours. Up to two hours? Two to six hours which should allow for fire safety professionals to come in and be able to do an evacuation of folks that will utilize the chair in a safe way. We are really excited about being able to use that in multiple events we hold in our office and to contribute to the City of Decatur.

The additional outcomes we had as a result of this grant was that we were able to provide additional fire and safety prevention in conjunction with the City of Decatur fire department. We actually were able to work with their fire department specifically has a specific education system. It's two hours for the stryker chair and the coalition stakeholder members include state ADA office, Georgia public health, department Department of Behavioral health and developmental disabilities, the American red cross, southeastern ADA center and the division of aging. Thank you.

So what we were able to do was to actually plan for further training with the City of Decatur and their education department. We did find that there were certain things that we wanted to tweak in one direction or another. And we planned to use those in further collaborations with the City of Decatur. We also were able to increase opportunities with the coalition for future train the trainer presentations. And to get that information out, but this grant allowed us that jump off point in order to be able to increase our outreach in those ways. And then certainly within immediate offices to utilize the safety equipment as well as training opportunity for local emergency services.

>> Thank you so much, I appreciate it I am elated to hear that those relationships created during the regional workshop series continued in the connection with the fire officials down there, Benita being one of them she was a stellar participant and she told me she was excited to be in conversation with you all and you all have made good on that promise. Congratulations to you all. I'm excited for you to use that stryker chair as well and others to get trained on it kudos to you all and the phenomenal work you have done.

Next up on our docket is coming out of Alaska, Alaska, we are tossing over to you.

>> Hi, everyone. My name is Patrick and I'm one of the newer staff attorneys at the P&A for the state of Alaska, the disability law center of Alaska. We are a pretty small pa in some senses we are one of the smallest states and one of the largest states. Roughly twice the size of the state of Texas with a population roughly the size of Washington, D.C.

We have a large indigenous first peoples population. We have a large rural population where a group -- we are essentially a group again of a population around the size of D.C. spread out over vast lands with many rural and indigenous communities.

As a result, many individuals in Alaska still use fire. They still use -- wood burning stove fire. They still use heating oil, they still use propane to heat their homes and the very long dark

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winters we have up here. As a result, we have roughly twice the national average of household fire fatalities. In addition, we have disproportionately outrageously high rates of carbon monoxide incidents, especially in rural areas with wood burning stoves, propane stoves, and in some cases poor ventilation. With all of these facts in mind, we were very concerned about the state of fire safety in the state of Alaska which is again a very rural and unique state. And so we decided to apply for and we were very grateful to have received this grant with the help of the NDRN with great thanks to FEMA for providing this program.

Our goal for the project was first of all to -- I'm sorry. I was getting distracted by the messages. Our primary goal here was first to get an inventory of what our local Alaska policies were, we are a large state. We do not have count -- we are broken up by large geographic divisions called boroughs. Among other things we took it upon ourselves to review the state of Alaska's laws as well as the laws that each individual borough which is again subdivisions more or less equivalent to counties in the lower 48. And we also went ahead and tried to do a survey of 50 state laws generally pertaining to fire safety but with a focus on accessible smoke alarm technology. And as we thought about the project and went and applied for the grant, we decided to focus this on a narrow legal topic which was smoke alarms for individuals who are Deaf, hard-of-hearing, Deaf-Blind or otherwise have hearing impairments. Because individuals with hearing impairments or are Deaf or Deaf-Blind because they cannot hear or -- very complicated situations, people have all different ranges of hearing loss but certain individuals cannot hear high frequency alarms and other individuals cannot hear alarms at all. And very concerned about this and about the general infrastructure about our state we decided to focus narrowly on those laws.

In order to engage the stakeholders, we set out a survey and we attempted to elicit as much information we could from the stakeholders. Unfortunately we didn't get the greatest results from our surveys at the end of the day we got somewhat low attendance from on-line surveys which we would attribute to COVID-19 and inability at that time to get out of the community and table or what not. We were able to connect with the national -- through the national disability rights network to the National Association for the Deaf. With them we were able to have a productive conversation and get up to speed on the technologies or whatnot and that was one of the goals of our project was to solicit the local stakeholder input. Ultimately we were hoping to determine what policies could improve the availability of smoke alarms that work for individuals with hearing impairments whether it be partial hearing loss, whether they be Deaf-Blind individuals and whether they be Deaf and finally it was our goal that remains to be our goal to share or find our policy recommendations with all of the local stakeholders in the disability communities in Alaska.

Again, the underlying issue is that individuals with disabilities, individuals who were in advanced age die in household fires at much greater rate than the average population. Per FEMA's fire reports as I mentioned before, Alaskans are dying at roughly twice the rate of household fires and I believe the statistics are higher as of 2019 for carbon monoxide poisonings.

. I'm a little out of order with the slides. But as I mentioned a bit, we went -- we reached out to the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community the best we can. What we learned was what the Deaf community wants and what the Deaf community needs and the Deaf-Blind and hard-of-hearing community needs is a big gap between their needs and what is currently being provided by the policies of Alaska and really by federal law. As things currently exist, most building codes as well as federal disability laws require strobe alarms to be installed in certain areas and certain buildings which are public accommodations. However, many individuals who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing they simply cannot -- while sleeping they won't be able to make use of a strobe alarm. Research shows time and time again that best way to wake up individuals who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing is in fact tactile devices or for some individuals lower frequency alarms.

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However, the building codes, they are still obsessed with the strobe alarms as we determined. There is the big cutoff between the needs of the community and the needs of the -- or sorry, the needs of the law itself and so it was our hope to try to investigate this a bit more and see what kind of policy recommendations we can make locally and perhaps maybe nationally.

What we found was Alaska does require the installation of smoke alarms in all dwellings and the alarms be installed with the accordance of NFPA72. And these codes as they are currently being implemented and the current editions in our state have adopted in regulations, they require visible or visual alarms as they are called in the international codes. And looking then to the individual individual boroughs and very little requirements with lacktal alarms, bed shakers, low frequency alarms or another technology that I don't believe I mentioned yesterday which is a pager systems and tactile devices that can be worn on one's person and can communicate with the building's fire safety system.

We went ahead and reviewed these places and we found essentially not a single city code or borough code that went far beyond the federal standard which again only requires a certain number of visual alarms to be installed in a certain number of rooms, for example in hotels and other places of public accommodation.

And we then went ahead and conducted a 50 state survey and what we found there was there is not much else to see on the state level but we did not go ahead and attempt the exhaustive process of going county by county or around the country. We did find a number of states that had in our view quite wisely decided to require private landlords to provide visual alarms by request. And we did think that was an interesting proposal upon discussing that with stakeholders in the Deaf community we quickly learned that's an incremental step in the right direction it's simply not going to help in any significant way when all of the research and the individual lived experiences of individuals who are Deaf and hard-of-hearing shows the safest and most ective -- most effective means of alerting a person to a fire is a tactile device or something that works for the individual and their disability. The visual alarms work well for individuals who are awake. They can work well for individuals who are awake and are able to see the flashing lights. However, all of the research that we were able to find through consulting with the NFPA, the NFPA's publications and FEMA's publication and studies and universities both within and outside of the United States showed that by far the best sort of protection in fire carbon monoxide situations is instead through a tactile bed shake placed under a pillow or a mattress or for individuals who are elderly and/or have partial higher frequency hearing loss for low frequency alarms.

The ultimate conclusion we reached is that there is clearly from the point of view of stakeholders in the Deaf and hard-of-hearing communities a major gap between the current policies both in the state of Alaska and the best our research revealed the country as a whole. Between the needs of Deaf, hard-of-hearing and Deaf-Blind consumers and the policies that are designed to protect them which again at this point in time seem to heavily lend towards the visual alarms. In all fairness, the building codes are, of course, rapidly evolving. The NFPA101 standards I believe it's the life code standards, they are now going ahead and making some radical improvements. Unofortunately I'm not aware of any states that adopted the recommendation of having a lower frequency alarm standard as a universal measure to ensure that essentially individuals that are both hard-of-hearing and have hearing within the normal range that they can both be alerted at the same time.

What we learned from speaking to community members and Deaf community and other stakeholders as well as assistive technology officials is with the Deaf community and the Deaf-Blind community perceives themselves as needing is a shift toward universal design, smart buildings and the so-called internet of things. That is smart smoke alarms. Smart fully integrated buildings that can interface with bed shakers with individual pagers and other devices designed

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to alert individuals who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing of an emergency in a building such as a fire or carbon monoxide event.

As this time it is our understanding after having done quite exhaustive research that there is simply has not been a complete comprehensive proposal on the policy and legal side of things to try to implement such a standard. Obviously technology is rapidly changing. This would require movement in industry and industry would ultimately have to come up with a universal form. It is our conclusion after writing this paper and beginning to discuss the results with other stakeholders and we are now in the process of beginning to share our findings with stakeholders and an attempt to circulate and the stakeholders and potential policy makers. The ultimate goal at this point is to continue to work on this project and continue to catalog what information we can find about emerging technologies, and emerging movements to create smart building platforms and designs that would allow the bed shakers, pagers and other devices tailored to the individual and individual disability related needs.

And it is our goal to continue working on that and consult with partners as much as we can and try to really bring the dialogue -- continue to move the dialogue forward as best we can tell this is really a neglected issue in certain senses. It's a very, very important issue from say angle you look at it as individuals who are Deaf and hard-of-hearing, while we couldn't find disability specific, statistics in the FEMA fire safety reports or elsewhere where we looked, when we spoke to the stakeholders they were quite frank with us there is a perception within the Deaf community and it's supported by what studies and statistics there are that can be found that individuals who are Deaf and hard-of-hearing are at particular risk of passing away in household fires. This is an incredibly important problem, but unfortunately smoke alarms and building standards and smart buildings, it's not the most interesting topic in the grand scheme of things. I think. As I learned it's very technical stuff. The NFPA has done an amazing job outlining endless -- I mean, countless standards for engineers that have been designed to protect the life and safety of all people. And it's our goal to just make sure that as these building codes and people continue to work towards fire safety for individuals who are Deaf and hard-of-hearing that this very important gap between the needs of the consumers and the current laws and policy that we can begin to start to close that and it's obviously a big task and much bigger task than the P&A in Alaska can do by itself. It's our goal to keep working on it and engage with our local community partners as well as other partners to see if we can't push that dialogue forward. I know I'm running a little over time but I would like to thank the NDRN and FEMA to give us this opportunity.

>> We appreciate you. Digging into the policies and taking on and tackling some of those issues that are quite technical and difficult and that has caused a lot of troublesome statistics to emerge in terms of there being gaps really not only in terms of the data but in terms of the critical need support for individuals who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing or Deaf-Blind. Thank you so much for digging into an issue that requires so much more additional attention and effort and we are quite proud to know that you guys will continue to progress in this area even outside of this initial project. Congratulations to you and the wonderful work that has been done by you and everyone else on your team.

I want to go ahead and push on over to the American Samoa protection and advocacy agency. Y'all have the next ten minutes. That will be Denise toson. And if you are talking you are on mute. We might have lost Denise so I will go ahead and cue up disability rights California

>> Denise is here but I think she is muted.

>> Okay, Denise, are you able to hop off mute? She could have stepped away from her computer for a minute.

>> She is here. I can see her. >> Okay.

>> It may be Denise from the Georgia advocacy office. She is on. Oh, no, there is another

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Denise.

>> Denise Thompson. That's who we are trying to get off mute. Charles, are you able to manually unmute her or is there a microphone issue?

>> She is having issue.

>> Audio issue. Denise, if you can, you might want to call if and perhaps that would be helpful. In the meantime, I will go ahead and give you some time and I Don want to stress you with this. You can get your audio coordinated and we will circle back around to you shortly. We will go ahead and move to Lauren from kiss ability rights California. We will let you go ahead and circle back to the American Samoa protection agency afterwards.

>> Sounds good. Thank you so much.

>> No worries.

>> Is somebody going to put our video -- perfect. Thank you.

>> Hi, everybody. I'm a managing attorney at disability rights California. And I work on our intake and outreach systems. I'm just going to do a brief introduction about why we applied for this grant and introduce my colleague Jordan who is the person who worked on and is now implementing our project.

. The reason we applied for this grant is no secret to everybody that California has experienced now pretty regular and devastating wildfires that have completely wiped out communities and have moved quickly. And so we did not have a disability rights California and established outreach procedure information sharing or education procedure that we could push out to our communities and we were getting a little bit concerned about how we could continue to educate the people in California who have disabilities who are constantly under the threat of fire. And then that was also paired with the fact that many of our fires were started by faulty utility lines. So in addition to the threat of fire, the state has allowed our investor owned utilities to turn the power off if the utal companies feel there is a potential that a fire could start. Which has led to extensive power outages throughout the year which have been absolutely devastating to people with disabilities who rely on power.

With that in mind, we applied for this grant so we could start working on how can we educate the community on what to do in case of a fire or these fire safety prevention measures that actually end up being disruptive as well.

I was really excited because a couple of months after we got this grant we found out we were age to hire a fellow named Jordan Davis. And Jordan is spending a year work on fire issues as they relate to the disability community in California. So Jordan, very -- I was very grateful to Jordan. Jordan took up this project as well with an advocate named Britney who is not here today. And Jordan, I think you are here and you can unmute so I will turn this over to Jordan Davis to talk more and then we will show the video.

>> To start preparing for a wildfire disaster. People with disabilities face added challenges during a disaster and making it harder to evacuate or find safe shelter this video provides basic steps to begin planning and appropriating for a wildfire disaster. Anyone could start doing today. Thank you.

>> Thank you so much, disability rights California, for creating that wonderful video that you are using for multiple disaster purposes. Using for multiple outreach and engagement streams and so appreciation to you all and the wonderfully inclusive way it was put together and I love that you used someone who was a part of a household who had multiple disability types because sometimes when those emergency plans or those individual evacuation plans are created, it's done with the thought that there is only one person perhaps in the household with a disability. I love that it highlighted different folks who had different types of disabilities. Wonderful video. Now want to come back around to the American Samoa protection and advocacy agency. Denise, are you able to jump off mute?

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>> Okay, can everyone hear me?

>> Yes! We can hear you. I will give you the last ten minutes before we get into questions and let you jump right into it.

>> I don't know what happened to my video but that's okay. So this is the hope house fire safety project we started. Hope house is a respite care residential, the only one residential home on the island. We have a population of approximately 50,000 people on the main island and an outer island. And so we decided to take this project and use it for hope house where there are approximately 15 elderly and also some children with disabilities who are not able to be taken care of at home. We found as we went further into this project that this was more of a larger area that we had to cover.

Next slide, please.

Was built in 1987. I'm agreeing with Alaska there is a lot of work to be done to this building. As I said, it's the only assisted living care home on the island. All in all, the care givers and administrative staff, maintenance officer, there is probably 40 plus and maybe over 50 people for Hope House itself. If we go to the next slide, you will see that it's quite -- there is going to be -- it's a lot larger scale than what we thought. Even though we have our people with disabilities and our elderly and the Hope House area, if you look to the arrow in the lower part of the picture, you see what looks like maybe mushrooms all joined together. That is actually one of those is Hope house and it branches off and has a men's wing, a woman's wing. There is also a chapel. I'm sorry, I forgot to mention that residential home run by the dioceses Catholic Church. There is a chapel there, montessori school, a day care center, a few apartments. You cannot see in that lower picture very well. There is also a block of two story -- a row of two stories which are now being used for quarantine quarters. It's on just the lower picture by itself is about 50,000 square feet we are looking at.

And you saw in the previous slide the top arrow picture, that's actually the cathedral and that's it there on the top left hand corner. It's similar to the nucleus building where Hope House is situated. The middle picture is the atrium, the main atrium why a lot of the elderly are able to assemble in the mornings or during the day, have visitors or do various activities.

The picture to the right is an example of what one of those round circular buildings look like. Back in the 80s, the plan was to sort of resemble what a typical Samoaen looks like. The typical doesn't have windows but this was just like a modern creation of the traditional Samoaen. A picture in the middle of the lower bottom of the screen is the montessori school. There is about I would say 15 to 20 children that attend the montessori school. Although hope house is only 40 to maybe 50, there are other like you see the nucleus areas of the whole complex will be way more than that amount. The picture on the right is some of the residents and the family members assembled in the chapter. So you can imagine we do have quite a few activities going on there for the elderly and our children throughout the year. It becomes quite a busy place. In about -- two years ago the fire department did a complete inspection of the whole complex. And they did already submit a report to the board. The Hope House is governed by a board. And there were many as you can imagine because it was built in the 80s there were many, many defects, many needs that needed to be addressed. We could see with nothing in place at the moment that the stress to provide prevention and really get going on fire drills is a big must. That's our Fire Chief. To give you an idea of our fire -- safety division down here in American Samoa, we have one fire engine. Can we go to the next slide. I think the next picture is going to show you little bit more -- so I'm working from home. But that picture there in the middle with the "X" and -- I'm sorry, I'm not sure what type of fire hose that's called, but these are seen throughout Hope House.

The picture behind it, the long corridor because of the design of the buildings, there are many of these long corridors.

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They have still sitting in there wired smoke alarm and wired smoke detectors that all lead to a panel. So that's the old system that they have. Which doesn't work at this time. We did -- with the funding that we got, we have arranged to purchase more fire extinguishers and detectors. There is a lot of work to be done.

This is a picture of -- I don't know why it's painted white but that's the fire extinguisher that sits outside of the east side of the complex. And to my -- we confirmed and walked the complex, that appears to be the only fire hydrant on the whole 50,000-square-foot property. That's another situation that needs to be addressed as well as with the collaboration with the fire department, with this report, stated, of course that it needs a brand-new sprinkler system, a brand-new fire alarm system. Emergency power supply as Alaska was talking about, the emergency exit signs and lights, lights with alarms with lights. Lights with staircase since it's a two story complex. As I mentioned, the fire hydrants and even the most basic of posting the emergency evacuation plan and other defects.

In this collaboration we have a new administration came into government and one of the difficulties as a P&A is you turn over staff there is a turnover of staff all the time so we start working with different people in emergency area, Homeland Security, DPS, fortunately the Fire Chief he has been there sometime and so he was very familiar with Hope House. So we need better collaboration and more focus on what's going on with this lack of addressing fire safety at this complex. It needs to be a big time project. For disability awareness month, we have teamed up with other disability organizations and we are going to show the slide that I wanted to show. We were on lockdown so I'm working from home. We are going to present virtually for disability awareness month. This is our second week of lockdown. We are kind of behind with all of the other states and territories where we just got new cases. So it's just slightly affecting our work. We are managing to keep pushing forward.

Yes, as I mentioned, you can see Hope house is closed. The staff have all of the COVID equipment but they really need to be ready for fire just as they are for COVID-19. Fire cannot be overlooked. COVID has overtaken the island. We just got cases but everything is focused on that and we are not focusing on what fire, our basic fire safety work that should be done and we should be pushing and advocating for at Hope House. That's where we are at the moment. And we are hoping that the outcomes will be for training, of course, training and the emergency maintenance people having wardens assigned and including our people with disability, the persons and residents there with disabilities. Hopefully to be included in that training to give their input and feedback.

As I mentioned, better collaboration we need. We rarely want to get the attention of the governor and whole community on this so we can move forward. Funding sources -- we have spoken and had dialogue with home Int security. They have provided funding for Hope House recently, but I believe it was funding that they were not able to apply for fire equipment. So that needs to also be looked at and addressed. Just the same as how Alaska was reporting, we are in the same boat. This residential home is really outdated in terms of fire safety. So that is going to be a thrust and move forward. We are a bit slow to the cause but we are trying to move and make this a big deal for March disability awareness month and really get some attention. From the governor as well. Thank you.

>> Thank you, this is Justice. Again, infinitely proud of all of the P&A especially all of the folks and every single P&A has acknowledged the commitment to continuing the work in this area although the grant period was for a few months, and almost everyone has acknowledged how this work will continue. I am actually going to pivot over to all of the participants who are still on the line. If you have questions I want to open up the space to you all before we close out. If anyone has a question for one of our stellar presenters today, please let us know. -- or if folks want to jump off mute, please do just let us know. Just give us a nudge here and we have a

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question coming from Mike. Because I use a screen reader it's difficult for me to hear the question while I'm also talking so could one of our presenters, perhaps Catherine or Lauren, could you read or any of the presenters, could you read the question that just came through the chat box for Mike.

>> This is Lauren, I can read it out loud.

>> Thank you.

>> So Mike says, in relation to emergency fire evacuations/planning, could the P&A awardees talk about what steps are being taken in building positive relationships and response times between the fire departments, police and EMTs while helping individuals with disabilities.

>> Does anybody want to take that? Anybody want to take it off the top?

>> Yes, please. If I can elaborate more on what American Samoa is has been doing in the past and we want to bring that back again. We had a strong relationship with Homeland Security and all of the first responder agencies, but as I mentioned when change of administration happens and COVID happened, we took away the importance of keeping those relationships so that whatever emergency arises, we radio all the time to keep dialogue going between all of us. We want to bring back the interagency council that Homeland Security had, especially for disabilities. And we are also advocating -- we have FEMA coming down here this week, I believe., in relation to COVID-19 and our cases. I have asked our director if we can push to having a disability integration officer on the staff at our local Homeland Security permanently because when FEMA comes down, we are only assigned a person when they come for each disaster or each emergency so we want to push to have someone in that position permanently so they are always keeping the dialogue open and keeping the relationships open and always having disabilities at the forefront. So I wanted to share that.

>> I wanted to give you the chance to answer a follow-up question. Kenneth has asked if there are individuals who use wheelchairs or mobility disabilities that are on the second floor of the Hope House? Are there folks on the second floor and do they have trouble or difficulties evacuating?

>> Thank you. I believe they are not on the second floor, yes, we do have folks on wheelchairs. One of the things mentioned in the Fire Chief's report which was very lengthy is you saw the picture of the long corridor and it's a maze in that place. When you see the shape of the buildings they are all circular and it's very easy to get lost. So I imagine trying to evacuate out of there. So we really have to work hard on their evacuation plan.

Color coding on the floor is what the Fire Chief mentioned. And all of the lights, yes, it's going to have to be really made accessible for emergency evacuation so that's a great question, thanks.

>> I think Ken made a comment earlier during the session around partnerships and waferl to be kocial with a ando waferl to -- in kind -- each and every one of you have devoted a significant amount of time and energy to cultivating true partnerships and how important is that to the work you are doing. The Native American P&A having partnerships with Johns Hopkins and the GOA health services and the Georgia offices connecting with the fire marshals there in the City of Decatur to the work that everybody has been doing in American Samoa and and the Alaska connecting with the Association of The Deaf. Just a tremendous effort for folks to keep this work going long-term and how much that is needed and it cannot be done alone. Does anybody have additional questions for our folks? We are a bit passed time but we wanted to give our presenters the time and space to really share the work that they have been doing two minutes is not enough. We want to give folks an opportunity to speak and share and with that I want to pass it on over to the audience. Does anybody else have any follow-up questions? Andrea gives you complimentary remarks. Andrea Vasquez from the national fire protection association just says this is phenomenal work and I concur with that comment. Anybody else have questions or commentary before we close out this spectacular showcase?

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All right, hearing none, I want to be mindful of everybody's time and I hear -- Virginia saying ya! Absolutely, no problem. This video will be posted up on the NDRN's website along with the slide decks from all of the P&A. If you have questions or you wanted to follow up on the strategies that were used disability inclusive fire safety strategies feel free to check out the website. Will include all of the resources that they created along with their slide decks and the recording of today's session. Thank you all so much for joining us. Have a wonderful day and a spectacular week, folks. We appreciate it.

>> Thank you.

>> Bye-bye, folks.