

Accessible Customer Service for Emergency Responders An Emergency Management Ontario E-Learning Utility

Communication Disabilities Video Transcript

Roberta Scott, Toronto Emergency Medical Services: An example I remember, a gentleman, that has since passed away, but he was well known in the downtown core and we got him a lot. And he had the disability, he was in a wheel chair and he also had difficulty speaking. And so he would often fall alot, but he couldn't communicate very well either, but he carried one of those communication boards. So we would often get calls from people who didn't know him and thought he was drunk, and thought he was just falling but he was a very well educated, well known person in the community. People who didn't know him didn't really know what was going on. So the communication barriers are, he couldn't speak to us, so we had to get his board and learn how to get the information from him from that board. But once we did, once we learned that was how he was going to communicate with us it worked really well. So you have to be patient, because there are times when it's not going to be very clear how to deal with these people right away and sometimes we have to work really quickly as first responders.

David Ralph, Toronto Emergency Medical Services: Prior to all of the technology that we have in 911 communication centers, which allow us to know where the caller is calling from immediately, I had the gentleman call me and obviously within the first couple of statements I made, I identified that he had a speech impediment. I don't know exactly what it was, but poor gentleman, because of the heightened anxiety he was experiencing, couldn't put more than two words together. And so I have to verify where he was, and we ended up getting down to tell me each digit in your phone, and I allowed him to say yes and no. And we actually counted through the numbers, 1, 2, 3 and he said yes, so the first digit was 3 and when we got through the numbers of his address, we went into the alphabet. It was funny...I recollect that he understood that I was going to be with him until we got what we needed to help him. I don't remember the circumstance of why he called, I can't remember what it was for him, but his anxiety level reduced to the point that he knew that I was his partner.