



Pierce County FAST Teams
Monthly Team Meeting

Pierce County Emergency Operations Center
June 11, 2013



Agenda

1. Introductions/Announcements
2. FAST New Member Training, May 22 & 23
3. Low Vision/ Blindness – Hongda Sao, Pierce County
Community Connections
4. Scenario-based exercise
5. Future meeting dates/times
 - a. Second Tuesday every month.
 - b. Next meeting July 9
6. Adjourn

Next meeting:

People who are chemically dependent

July 9 1:30-3:30 pm

Pierce County DEM

2501 South 35th Street, Suite D

Tacoma, WA 98409

FAST MONTHLY MEETING

June 11, 2013 – 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm

Focus: Training on Low Vision / Blindness – from Hongda Sao, Pierce County Community Connections

Hongda provided information about his background and how he became blind. He discussed the range of blindness. Only about 2% of the population is totally blind. He shared information about some of the assistive technology he uses, its limitations during disasters, and ideas.

(As the information was discussed, it might be that some of the items could be purchased at reasonable costs to put in our Shelter Trailers for use by FAST.)

- JAWS is used to read computer information. The website at <http://www.freedomscientific.com/products/lv/low-vision-products.asp> also has a number of other assistive technologies.
- CCTV – closed circuit TV is used to enlarge text and visions.
 - Hongda can read about size 64 font.
 - This works with email and Word
 - He used a portable CCTV away from the office.
- He uses a recorder to take notes.
- He uses a Luggage Locator – it has a transmitter and receiver that he can attach to an item or a person to keep track of.

In a Shelter Situation:

- When giving directions or instructions, be sure the person who is blind knows you are talking to him/her. You may say, “You in the white shirt”, but they wouldn’t know that was them. A touch on the arm or shoulder will verify you are talking to them.
- Keep in mind, some who are blind also have other medical issues that may need to be addressed.
- Those who are blind need to get training about what to do/expect in a shelter.
- Convey information by hearing.
- Some information may be conveyed through Smart Phones.
- Encourage those who are blind to sign up for emergency alerts.
 - There is GPS for the Blind (<http://www.senderogroup.com/> or <http://www.nanopac.com/GPS%20Trekker.htm>)
 - The Seattle Art Museum uses a “wand” that can be passed over a picture for information about it.
- Be sure to point out the restrooms in the shelter
- Introduce them to what the shelter looks like.

Some tools or tips that may be needed in a Shelter:

- Cane users are taught to use the wall. This may be a challenge in a shelter since the walls are often premium real estate for cots and others who may have disabilities.
 - Try to position those who are blind or have low-vision on the outside perimeter and near the end of a row possibly near restrooms or kitchen facilities to make it easier for them to locate their assigned space and the areas in the shelter they may need most often
 - Canes are used to help detect obstacles.
 - Non-folding canes can be purchased for about \$7.00. The National Federation for the Blind has a free white cane program with canes in the following lengths: 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37,

- 39, 53, 55, 57, 59, 61, and 63 inches. <https://nfb.org/free-cane-program> There are other internet providers. Folding canes run about \$40-\$50.
- Obstacles in the rooms can actually become landmarks to help with navigation.
 - Those who use canes will often have multiple ones in multiple places.
 - Magnifiers run about \$40. Those with LED lights might be up to \$75.
 - Depth perception can be a challenge in new locations.
 - Many will ask others for help.
 - Those who have Guide Dogs are taking on a different life style in caring for the dog. Dogs are trained to go around obstacles where those using canes are taught to detect obstacles.
 - Medications – having pill boxes where meds can be separated is helpful. They may need assistance sorting the medications initially to sizes and colors.
 - Keeping track of personal belongings may be a challenge in a shelter. Keeping one bag to keep track of would be helpful. They also make vests with multiple pockets around \$40 so a person can keep items close.
 - Providing them with flashlights would give them a way to identify if they have a need.
 - Some motion activated speakers might be helpful to identify when they are near certain landmarks.

Scenario 1 Thoughts:

- Orient the person to the room
- Provide a cane for them to use.
- Put their cot on the outside of the building near water, restrooms, etc.

Scenario 2 Thoughts:

- Glasses and magnifiers are two different tools. Magnifiers are not for mobility.
- Question the caregiver to see what level of care will be needed.
- Orient him to the area.
- See if he has an old pair of glasses. Would “cheater” glasses from the drug store help?
- Get information about his optometrist or ophthalmologist – may be able to send a prescription to another town to get replacement glasses.
- Provide access to a radio which can be comforting.

Scenario 3 Thoughts:

- Find out the status of the request; it may need to be re-issued.
- May need a medical check.
- Provide some walking stick.
- Let her son assist as much as possible.

Other thoughts:

- Keep in mind that FAST can request Medical Reserve Corp (MRC) to help at the shelter if there are medical needs to be considered outside the scope of FAST (prescription medication is one of those areas).

Next meeting: July 9, 2013 from 1:30-3:30 at Pierce County Emergency Management



Pierce County FAST Teams Low Vision and Blindness Scenarios



On Tuesday evening May 14th around 6pm a large apartment fire broke out in Lakewood starting on the first floor. This spread through the entire building of 20 residents. Some of the residents were forced to leave all of their belongings behind. A pet friendly shelter opened an hour later for all 20 residents. FAST has now been deployed to this shelter. Among the shelter residents are:

1. A woman in her 50s who is blind. She uses a Seeing Eye dog for normal daily functions. However, they were separated during evacuation or transportation to the shelter. The dog's whereabouts are unknown. The woman is very upset and has no other means of support to help her get around. She believes the dog was injured during the fire.
2. An older man and younger woman. The man is wearing very thick lens eye glasses and they have cracked. The woman with him says they were stepped on during evacuation. He has extremely low vision and the woman needs to help him around. The woman is confirmed to be his caregiver. She had received a call from a family member and has to leave immediately out of town. Now the man is alone with his broken glasses.
3. A young man with his mother. The mother is confirmed to be blind and have glaucoma. Her walking stick and glaucoma medication were left behind in the fire. She hasn't taken her medication since early that morning and she is having some discomfort in her eyes. A request from the shelter has been placed over two hours ago but no one seems to remember who took it and if any information was found.