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July is Disability Pride Month: Time for the building industry to get serious about accessibility

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Boston, MA Disability Pride Month is coming in July. As it approaches, this is a good time for building stakeholders – building owners, facility managers, architects, contractors, and the public – to think about how they can improve accessibility for the millions of people who use their facilities.

The American Association of Automatic Door Manufacturers (AAADM) has a message for these stakeholders: Do the right thing. If your facilities need upgrades to make them more accessible, get them done. Consider it an investment that will pay huge dividends by literally opening doors to new customers, patrons, and clients.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law in July 1990. That same year, Boston held the first Disability Pride Day. In 2015, to mark the 25th anniversary of this groundbreaking legislation, the first Disability Pride Month was observed and has been recognized in each subsequent July. It is an opportunity to honor the history, experiences, struggles, and achievements of the differently abled.

The ADA is no doubt landmark legislation; unfortunately, it does not require automatic doors at the entrances to public buildings. This incredible oversight is somewhat offset by IBC (International Building Code) 1105.1.1, a hard-fought provision long sought by accessibility advocates and AAADM that includes automatic doors for entrances to public buildings that meet certain building occupant load thresholds. But, the fact remains, too many public buildings are still difficult or impossible for people with mobility limitations to access. Upgrades such as ramps, wider doorways, and automatic doors help disabled patrons easily and independently visit, make purchases, and use services. AAADM has long been an ally in the fight to make public buildings accessible to all.

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