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Opening doors to inclusivity: Automatic doors align with the mission of International Persons with Disabilities Day

December 13, 2024 - Front Section



Boston, MA International Persons with Disabilities Day is observed each December 3rd, shining a light on the importance of removing physical barriers for the over one billion people worldwide living with disabilities. The American Association of Automatic Door Manufacturers (AAADM) works hard to amplify the message that these efforts benefit society as a whole.

The integration of automatic doors into building design – particularly those deemed public gathering places, such as restaurants, transportation hubs, grocery and convenience stores, schools and universities, and work places – is a practical way to support the principles of International Persons with Disabilities Day and a great example of how design and technology can align to help foster a more inclusive and accessible world. Automatic doors eliminate or reduce the need for physical effort to open them. By removing barriers to entry, automatic doors help people with disabilities

move through spaces more independently because they don't need to rely on others for assistance.

Automatic doors are part of a broader effort to create environments where everyone, regardless of their physical abilities, can participate equally. Their presence at doorways and entrances is a step toward designing spaces that are welcoming and accommodating to all individuals.

AAADM is a strong advocate for increasing public access, working to make changes to the International Building Code.

(IBC) that increase placement of automatic doors. This includes requiring automatic doors at public entrances of buildings that meet certain occupancy thresholds, ensuring that at least one door is either a full power-operated or a low-energy power-operated door.

The IBC updates reflect a broad recognition of the role automatic doors play in enhancing accessibility and accommodating various needs that make traditional doors challenging or impossible to use.

Ensuring physical access to facilities—whether for voting, shopping, dining, or essential services—is essential for the independence of individuals with disabilities. Automatic doors are a vital element in providing autonomy and ease of access for those facing physical and mobility challenges.

Established by the United Nations in 1992, International Persons with Disabilities Day promotes advocacy for the rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities and to heighten awareness of their challenges in political, social, economic, and cultural realms.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540