



FROM THE PUBLISHER OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2, No. 4

June 2011

[www.UniversalDesign.com](http://www.UniversalDesign.com)

## **Universal Design News and Information Roundup**

### **Highlighting What You May Have Missed...**

So much information comes across our desks and computers on a daily basis, it's easy to miss something you might otherwise be interested in. **UDN Direct** has pulled together highlights of recent stories and information of interest for you.

### **First-Year Findings on the Accessibility of Playground Surfaces Published**

Do playground surfaces remain accessible for people with disabilities over time? A research team at Indiana University's National Center on Accessibility (NCA) is attempting to answer that question. First-year findings from a longitudinal study on the installation and maintenance of accessible playground surfaces, funded by the US Architectural & Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board), reveal that there is no perfect playground surface. (The study is examining the performance of various types of surfacing materials at 25 newly constructed playgrounds, including poured-in-place rubber, engineered wood fiber, rubber tiles, and hybrid surface systems.)

Even within 12 months of installation, each type of surface studied was found to have accessibility, safety or maintenance issues. Poured-in-place rubber installed at one site was not resilient enough to meet ASTM standards for impact attenuation. Surface tiles installed at another site had puncture holes, buckling and separating seams that created openings and changes in level on accessible routes.

Other first-year findings included:

- Playground sites with loose fill engineered wood fiber were found to have the greatest number of deficiencies affecting the accessible route to play components, including a lack of firmness and stability;
- Rubber tile and poured-in-place rubber surfaces were found to have the highest level of firmness and stability;
- Besides firmness and stability issues, many surfaces had noncompliant slopes, cross slopes and changes in level; and

- In some instances, surface materials were not installed according to manufacturers' recommendations to achieve an accessible surface.

The study was undertaken to collect information helpful to the public in choosing surfacing materials most suitable for playgrounds based on performance, installation and maintenance considerations. NCA researchers will continue monitoring and testing surfacing materials at project sites to assess results over a total period of three years. The project is due to be completed next year.

To access the study, visit <http://www.ncaonline.org/index.php?q=node/1447>. For more information, contact Jennifer Skulski at [jskulski@indiana.edu](mailto:jskulski@indiana.edu) or 812.856.4422, or Peggy Greenwell at [greenwell@access-board.gov](mailto:greenwell@access-board.gov) or 202.272.0017.

### **The Age of Ease**

The May 7, 2011, issue of the *Los Angeles Times* included an article which covered the Kitchen & Bath Industry Show, held in late April in Las Vegas. Entitled "The Age of Ease," the article reported on the rising number of Universally Designed products that were featured at the show, as well as a significant increase in product manufacturers' understanding of this rapidly growing market. Interior designer and UD expert Mary Jo Peterson shared her insights in the article, and companies featured in the article included TOTO, Kohler, Hafele, Great Grabz, Blum, Delta, Salice and Drawer Box Specialties. To read the article, visit <http://www.latimes.com/features/home/la-hm-kbis-20110507,0,2815558.story?page=1>.

### **Nonprofit Housing Organization Formed in Australia to Promote Universal Housing Design**

As reported in the October 2010 issue of *Universal Design Newsletter*, two leading organizations in Australia—Master Builders Australia and the Housing Industry Association—agreed to make all new homes compliant with Universal Design principles by 2020. Leaders from the country's housing industry and disability sector collaborated on the development of voluntary standards for universal housing design through their government's National Dialogue on Universal Design.

The Livable Housing Design guidelines, developed in 2010, provide awareness within the residential design and construction industry and governments about the benefits of incorporating universal design principles into new housing. The voluntary guidelines are intended to apply to all new homes, helping builders ensure homes are prepared for the changing needs of residents and visitors.

During a National Dialogue meeting held last month, the establishment of a nonprofit housing organization, Livable Housing Australia, was announced. "Livable Housing Australia will promote greater understanding of the value of universal housing design within the community and promote Universal Housing Design practices throughout the residential building and property industry," said Senator Jan McLucas, Parliamentary

Secretary for Disabilities and Carers. The organization will also identify appropriate mechanisms to assist in achieving the milestones and targets in the Livable Housing Design guidelines.

For more information, visit

<http://www.governmentnews.com.au/2011/04/15/article/Housing-organisation-established/DDNXSYZGZO>.

## **President Obama Names New Members of Access Board, Starnes Elected Chair**

Nancy Starnes, of Arlington, VA, former director of external affairs for the National Organization on Disability (NOD), was elected Access Board Chair during the Board's March meeting. Starnes, who was appointed to the Board in 2008 by President Bush, has been active in disability rights advocacy for over 30 years and has served on numerous organization and consumer boards and coalitions. During her tenure at NOD, Starnes led efforts to increase equality for people with disabilities in the nation's towns, cities and counties. Earlier in her career, she served as chief operating officer of the Paralysis Society of America and headed two county offices for people with disabilities in New Jersey. Starnes also was elected to the town council of Sparta, New Jersey and served as its Mayor.

"It is an honor to lead an agency that is dedicated to improving the lives of people with disabilities through accessible design," Starnes noted after her election. "I look forward to helping the Board do all that it can in fulfilling its vital mission in the year ahead."

In May, President Obama appointed Mathew McCullough of Washington, DC, and Deborah A. Ryan of Boston to the Access Board, succeeding members James R. ("J.R.") Harding II and John C. Wyvill. McCullough is executive director of the District of Columbia (DC) Developmental Disabilities Council, which promotes independence and equal opportunity for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Ryan is head of Deborah A. Ryan & Associates, an accessibility consulting firm that specializes in compliance with design requirements issued under Massachusetts law and federal laws such as the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act and the Fair Housing Act. She also previously served on the Access Board's Public Right-of-Way Access Advisory Committee.

For more information, visit <http://www.access-board.gov/news/members2011.htm>.

## Events on the Horizon

- **June 2, 2011: *Access Board Webinar on Accessible Doors***, 2:30-4:00 pm ET. Details: <http://www.accessibilityonline.org>.
- **June 5-8, 2011: *Festival of International Conferences on Caregiving, Disability, Aging and Technology (FICCDAT)***, Toronto, Canada. Includes the International Conference on Best Practices in Universal Design. Details: <http://www.ficcdat.ca/>.
- **June 9, 2011: *Mid-Atlantic ADA Center Disability Employment Update***, Greenbelt, MD. Details: <http://www.adainfo.org/content/Disability-Employment-Update>.
- **June 9-10, 2011: *International Conference on Stairway Usability and Safety***, Toronto, Canada. Details: <https://www.confmanager.com/main.cfm?cid=1807&nid=14519>.
- **July 11-13, 2011: *US Architectural & Transportation Barriers Compliance Board Meeting***, Washington, DC. Details: <http://www.access-board.gov/about/meetings.htm>.
- **July 11-16, 2011: *AHEAD 2011: Sustainable Access through Partnership (34<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Association on Higher Education and Disability)***, Seattle, WA. Details: <http://www.ahead.org/conferences/2011>.

For additional UD-related events, visit: <http://udconsultants.com/news/calendar-of-events>.