WHEELCHAIR SAFETY

WHEELCHAIR SAFETY: Includes the proper operation and maintenance of wheelchairs and other mobility devices to prevent injury. Unsafe maintenance and operation of these devices can result in serious injury to the individual and their care-givers.

DID YOU KNOW?
- Injuries from unsafe operation and maintenance of wheelchairs and other mobility devices (scooters, walkers, bath chairs, etc.) can be serious; possibly life-threatening.
- Mobility device injuries can be prevented.

RISK FACTORS THAT CAN CAUSE INJURY
- faulty brakes
- broken/missing parts
- missing anti-tip bar
- worn wheels & tires
- curbs, ramps, inclines & stairs
- uneven pavement & slippery floors
- tight/close bathroom quarters
- unsafe transfers, tips & falls
- inappropriate use (leg rest, door stop, step ladder, cart, etc.)
- unsecured safety belt
- others riding on the device
- heavy items hung on the device
- driving with a device unsecured

BE ALERT!
Always be alert to potential mobility device hazards for all individuals — even those Operating independently.

PREVENTION
- Repair or replace faulty or missing parts — especially brakes.
- Do not use a mobility device to hold open a door or as a foot rest.
- Utilize anti-tip bars found across the back of the wheelchair or device.
- Avoid hanging any items in the back of the wheelchair or device — reaching for items and/or heavy loads can cause tipping.
- Assist and monitor all individuals near curbs, inclines and/or ramps.
- Make sure to center the device when going up and down ramps or uneven surfaces to avoid tipping forward or to the side.
- Ensure the device is properly secured during transport with four-point tie-downs.
- Remove and store add-on equipment prior to transport, i.e. oxygen tanks, trays, storage bags, etc.
SAFETY TIPS

- WHEELCHAIR TRANSFERS:
  - Always apply ALL brakes and test them.
  - Apply anti-tip bar (if available).
  - Ensure that the chair, bed, or other location is secure — does not slide.
  - Make sure the individual is not restrained by a belt and/or clothing.
  - Use a gait belt, especially when performing a one-person transfer.
  - Move the individual from a high to low position whenever possible.
    - If transferring from a bed to a wheelchair, bed should be positioned higher.
    - Use a Hoyer lift and/or two or more person lifts when needed.
  - Whenever in doubt, seek assistance or two-person transfer.
  - Use good body posture when assisting with a transfer.

- ADDITIONAL MOBILITY TIPS:
  - Ensure electric mobility devices are fully charged prior to use in the community.
  - Keep traffic areas and pathways clear of clutter and debris.
  - Be Respectful: A mobility device is an extension of the individual.
    - Maintain appropriate distance and respect as you would for the actual person: do not push on their mobility device, lean on it, or tap on it.
    - Always transport the person with care, facing forward, and speak directly to the person.
    - Do not ride on the device or allow children to ride on the device with the individual.
    - Do not inappropriately utilize the device as a door stop, foot stool, cart, “joy-riding”, etc.
    - Do not hang items such as backpacks and/or purses on the back of the device or place them on the individual’s lap during transport.
    - Handle and maintain the mobility device with care, respecting the individual’s dependence upon the device for their personal livelihood and independence.
    - Make certain the individual has a basic understanding of the safety and maintenance requirements for their mobility device.

EMERGENCY

Immediately call 9-1-1 when an injury results in any of the following conditions:

- DIFFICULTY BREATHING
- LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS
- INABILITY TO MOVE THE INJURED BODY PART
- BLEEDING
- EXCESSIVE PAIN