

# The Sign Post

Newsletter for the Central California Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf



October 2011

Volume 9, Number 4

## Emergency Management and Interpreting

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As we have seen in events throughout the nation the past decade, from 9/11 to Katrina and Rita, the severe weather across the nation, the wildfires in California, and recently hurricane Irene along the East Coast, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community continue to struggle to receive timely, effective communication and notification from local, state and federal government entities.



As a sign language interpreter you have a unique skill set (a resource) which may need to be utilized in emergency or disaster situations by the local Office of Emergency Services. In the

event you were contacted for this kind of service, would you be ready? Consider your response to the following questions:

- Do I or my family have an emergency plan in place?
- Do I have an emergency kit in the home and am I (and my family) prepared to shelter in place for up to 72 hours?
- Do I have an emergency “Go Kit” readily accessible in my house, car, and workplace?
- Do I have at least a week’s worth of medications stock piled for myself and each family member? Do I have a list of medications, dosage, doctor name/number, pharmacy name/number for each family member at home, work and in my wallet?
- Is my family prepared and able to safely get to a shelter?
- Do I have an understanding of the emergency management field and the Incident Command System (ICS)?
- Am I confident that I can interpret in stressful and/or emotionally charged environments? Have I considered

what types of situations these may be and how different they may be from typical “emergency” situations?

- Have I received my annual inoculations?
  - Have I considered additional strategies for debriefing and recovering from highly demanding assignments that could increase my exposure to post traumatic stress disorder.
- If you answered “Yes” to all of these, then you are ready to go! If you answered “No” to one or more of these, then now is the time to become better educated before you self-deploy to a situation in which you could harm yourself or others or become a problem for local officials.

### Get Prepared

Emergencies and disasters can occur at any time, day or night. Before committing to service in local, regional or statewide emergency management efforts, an interpreter need to assess his or her readiness to face the potential event of a disaster or emergency, both for self and family members, including pets and service animals.

Preparedness efforts begin with first asking yourself “If a disaster happened, am I prepared and able to immediately decide and take steps to evacuate or shelter in place? Where would I go?” Familiarity with your geographic area and which disasters are likely to occur locally, will allow one to better prepare and respond. The more prepared you are, the less stressful an event may be for you.

Emergency Managers recommend that individuals and families create an emergency plan. Plans should include and be discussed with all members of the family and should include: designating a meeting spot, one within and one outside your neighborhood; phone numbers and addresses of a local contact and an out-of-state contact; assemble a 72-hour emergency kit for each member of your household (including pets/service animals). Additional consideration should address specific items for individuals with disabilities, older adults, children and pets/service animals, especially medication and daily medical supplies. These kits should be placed in an easily accessible area of your house, car, workplace and at school.

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**Honoring Tradition  
Embracing Change  
Celebrating Growth**

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### CCRID Executive Board

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Leadership Meetings are open to all CCRID members. See the calendar at our website for date, time and place. Contact [ccrid@ccrid.org](mailto:ccrid@ccrid.org) with any questions regarding meetings.

The Sign Post is prepared quarterly. Please send ideas, items or information for announcements to newsletter editor Shannon M. Simonelli at [ccrid@ccrid.org](mailto:ccrid@ccrid.org) one month prior to publication date.

# From Pg 1: Emergency Response for Interpreters

Interpreters cannot be expected to assist others in an emergency if they have not first taken care of themselves and insured the safety of self and family members.

## How Does Interpreting Fit In?

Emergencies have an impact on the whole community, which means that when disaster strikes, the local Deaf and Hard of Hearing community will be affected. The ADA requirement for communication access does not change in the face of an emergency situation - in fact it becomes imperative. Increasingly, Emergency Managers are recognizing the need for qualified interpreters in shelters, at press conferences, and on site with first responders. Interpreters responding to disasters or emergencies need to be willing, dependable and demonstrate both the technical linguistic skills and emotional wherewithal for interpreting in crisis situations. Because of the unique

nature of disasters and emergency situations it is also important for interpreters to have adequate training in basic emergency response (CalEMA) protocols.

This is not a singular effort; there is a nationwide outcry for interpreter involvement and training in Emergency Management. During the 2009 RID National Conference in Philadelphia, the membership passed a motion to establish an ad hoc committee to develop a position paper to address the issues interpreters face during emergencies/disasters and non-declared local emergencies/disasters. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is working on a national scale

**Interpreters cannot be expected to assist others in an emergency if they have not first taken care of themselves and insured the safety of self and family members.**

California Emergency Management Agency has developed a Disaster Response Sign Language Interpreter training course to ensure that the state can send in sign language interpreters if there is a state declaration. In Los Angeles there are teams of interpreters with Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) and beyond.

This too can become a reality for the Central Valley.

If you are interested in getting involved with emergency preparedness and training on the local level contact Shannon M. Simonelli at [Shannon.Simonelli@fresno.gov](mailto:Shannon.Simonelli@fresno.gov).

## CHALLENGE

The following excerpt is from "Great Interpreters Don't Grow on Trees: 123 Steps to the Top of the Sign Language Interpreting Field" by Kelley C. Clark

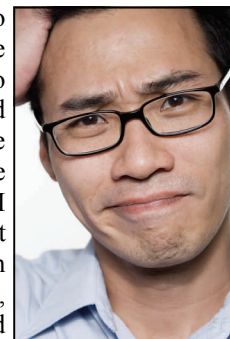
### Those Same Old Questions

How do you respond when asked if you are the deaf person's sister, brother, or daughter? What do you say when asked why the deaf person is running late for their appointment? How do you answer when asked if deaf people are allowed to drive, or if you can read Braille like deaf people? Am I pushing any buttons yet? Do you ever feel like getting cheeky and informing them their question lacks the common sense component?

As Wittier-Merithew explains, we sometimes forget how far we have come. These sincere questions come from a person's need to learn more than they currently know. Because over the years, we hear the same questions and because many questions are paternalistic in nature, we might feel tempted to stick up our noses and impolitely answer their question or to ignore their question altogether.

Another approach would be to craft a response that is both polite and educational. To the woman who approached me after a job and emphatically suggested I wear white gloves when interpreting because they would look "neat," I said, "Oh, I hadn't thought of wearing gloves, but I believe they are sometimes worn in theatrical settings." Admittedly, before I responded, I had to discard the first two answers that came to me: "What?!" and "That's a new one!"

By responding politely to seemingly daft questions, we open a channel for dialogue. Your task is to list commonly asked questions and match them to answers that are both respectful and informative.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Cherished Tidings

CCRID members who have had life-changing events:

Ann Spagna-Klinetobe is proud to announce the birth of her Great Grandson, Lucas Carter Barnes. Born on July 31, 2011 at 12:30A.M. Lucas came into the world at 9 lbs. 4 oz at the Navy Hospital in San Diego, CA. Ann's Grand daughter, Sarah Shaffer Barnes and her spouse Morgan Barnes are his parents. Sarah is a Marine stationed at Miramar Air Base in San Diego.

All names included with expressed permission.

## EVENTS

### October

**2, 2:30pm—4pm, Leadership Meeting;** Suzanne Conway's residence, Fresno  
email [ccrid@ccrid.org](mailto:ccrid@ccrid.org) for directions

**29, 9am—430pm Shift Happens,** DHHSC, 5340 N Fresno Street, Fresno, CA 93710

**December** - CCRID Will be on hiatus for the month of December. Look for our spring lineup in January!

### November

**5, 9am—11am,** Terp Time, Professional Development: **Practice using ASL Performatives** Starbucks at Willow/Herndon, Clovis, CA

**6, 2:30pm—4pm, Leadership Meeting;** Suzanne Conway's residence, Fresno

For details and event fliers go to the calendar listed at [www.ccrd.org](http://www.ccrd.org)