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NATIONAL MOBILITY EQUIPMENT DEALERS ASSOCIATION HELPS PAVE THE WAY TO MOBILITY FREEDOM

TAMPA, Fla. (November 28, 2012) – For the millions of individuals with disabilities across the United States and Canada, having safe and reliable transportation is the key to enjoying an active lifestyle. However, many are unaware of the vehicle purchase process or even the equipment available to them to make mobility possible. For the members of the [National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association \(NMEDA\)](#) – the industry’s trade organization – this issue is at the core of their existence.

“Our mission is to unify and improve the mobility equipment industry,” said Dave Hubbard, executive director and CEO of NMEDA. “Transportation is the key to freedom and NMEDA is the key to quality transportation. So much so, we developed the Quality Assurance Program (QAP) to elevate vehicle modification and equipment installation in a manner consistent with the highest guidelines available.”

When the time arrives for a caregiver or person with disabilities to purchase a new or used vehicle, there is an important step-by-step process:

Step One – Contact a NMEDA Dealer

The mobility equipment dealer should be the first stop in the buying process. A NMEDA dealer provides in-depth knowledge on the variety of vehicles and equipment available, aids in locating a certified driver rehabilitation specialist (CDRS) for an evaluation and reviews financing options with the buyer. Unlike an automotive dealer, their emphasis is on mobility equipment and wheelchair accessible vehicles, and the need to match the right solution to the right person.

Step Two – Consult a Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist

If the driver of the vehicle has a disability, schedule an appointment to be evaluated by a CDRS. During the assessment, the driver will be tested on motor skills, strength, coordination, perception and cognitive skills. This evaluation helps determine the equipment needs for a specific disability. Once the assessment is complete, a written prescription will be provided. The [Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists \(ADED\)](#) is available for questions and assistance.

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Step Three – Conduct Research

It is important to conduct research when buying a vehicle. As with any purchase, a buyer should always be an informed buyer.

- *Consider the individual's needs*, meaning the dimensions of the wheelchair and who will be driving the vehicle. This will dictate whether a side-entry or rear-entry vehicle may be needed.
- *Evaluate the family's lifestyle and daily routine*. How much parking space is available at home for a ramp or lift to deploy? What are the most visited destinations and is there handicap parking available? Is there more than one wheelchair user in the household? These answers help determine the type of vehicle and equipment best suited for the buyer's lifestyle, such as a minivan, SUV, truck, car, ramp and lift.
- *Establish a budget*. Buyers must remember to consider a down payment, monthly payments, insurance, gas and an estimate for yearly maintenance. The budget plays a large role in deciding whether to buy a new or used vehicle, or whether to adapt a current one. Also, they should be familiar with rebates, grants, loans and other available financial aid. Furthermore, veterans should research their funding options from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Step Four – Buying the Vehicle

At this stage, the buyer may decide to purchase a wheelchair accessible van or adapted car directly from a NMEDA dealer. If the buyer elects to purchase a new or used vehicle from an automotive dealer and have it modified, the buyer should follow the recommended vehicle guidelines determined by the NMEDA dealer and the CDRS. Be sure to test-drive the vehicle or a similar one before the purchase is finalized.

Step Five – Get Driver Training

Once the vehicle and equipment is purchased, the driver needs to learn how to use it. If personalized mobility equipment is used for driving, it may require a few training sessions with a CDRS to effectively and safely drive a modified vehicle.

Step Six – Get Reimbursed

When applicable, the buyer should submit a Mobility Assistance Reimbursement Application to the appropriate vehicle manufacturer. The step-by-step process may differ from company to company, so it is best to visit the manufacturer's website and download the correct forms prior to the purchase of a vehicle. Veterans must also remember to follow the VA's requirements for receiving financial assistance.

"Our members take great pride in assisting people with disabilities gain their mobility freedom," continued Hubbard. "They are a tremendous resource, and enjoy lifelong relationships with their customers."

To learn more, please visit NMEDA's website at www.nmeda.com. A [CDRS instructional video](#) is also available to understand the evaluation process.

About the National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association

Founded in 1989 as a non-profit trade association, the National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association (NMEDA) supports nearly 600 mobility equipment dealers, manufacturers and driver rehabilitation specialists in the U.S. and Canada dedicated to expanding opportunities for people with disabilities. NMEDA is also the program champion for the annual National Mobility Awareness Month held in May. For information on NMEDA, please visit www.nmeda.com, as well as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Pinterest](#).

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