

Case Study: Mark¹

Home accessibility modifications for a 59-year-old male with spinal cord injury

Background

Mark is a 59-year-old male, 5'9" and 175 lbs, who was involved in an industrial accident resulting in an incomplete spinal cord injury. Prior to the accident, he had minimal health problems, including diabetes. Today he presents with RSD, peripheral edema, migraines and recurrent cellulitis infections to both of his legs. He uses a custom lightweight manual wheelchair.

Mark lives alone in a single-family home with a full bathroom and bedroom upstairs, and a half bath on the first floor. His basement contains a laundry room, exercise room, and workshop where he likes to tinker with electronic gadgets.

Mark's goal is to be as independent as possible in his own familiar environment, to be as active as he was before, and to remain safe during completion of ADL tasks.

Mobility Facts & Challenges:

- ▶ Can walk short distances with the assistance of a rolling walker.
- ▶ Has extreme difficulty navigating stairs. He can do two or three steps with the assistance of a caregiver, but finds it extremely challenging.
- ▶ Uses a wheelchair at times when walking is difficult. He can propel short distances with use of his feet.
- ▶ Has a difficult time standing up and repositioning himself on his own; he often "furniture walks" to steady himself. His upper body strength is strong, however, and can support his weight on better days.
- ▶ Struggles with independent daily hygiene.
- ▶ Finds it difficult to get to the bathroom independently at night.
- ▶ Gets cold easily.
- ▶ Is at serious risk of falling.

¹ Names and details have been modified for privacy reasons.

Recommendations

After completing a thorough home evaluation with his therapist and Certified Environmental Accessibility Consultant (CEAC) professional from Lifeway Mobility, the following solutions were determined to help Mark. These are categorized as short-term product solutions (products needed immediately) and longer-term product solutions (products needed within 30-60 days).

Short-Term Product Solutions:

Stair Lift: Purchasing, renting, or financing a stair lift is both a short- and longer-term solution that will allow Mark to safely and easily reach the second floor and basement of his home. If the stair lift is not an option, the bedroom should be moved to the first floor.

Lifeway Mobility offers rental options and financing for new and pre-owned stair lifts as well as a wide variety of styles.

Ramp: A modular aluminum ramp should be installed either in the garage or at the front door. This will allow Mark to wheel his walker and/or wheelchair up the ramp instead of navigating the stairs. Inside the garage would be preferable, allowing Mark to avoid bad weather.

Furthermore, the addition of threshold ramps and the removal of all throw rugs will allow better mobility for both Mark and his caregivers.



Lifeway Mobility offers rental options, financing, used, and new aluminum ramps. We also buy back our ramps should Mark choose to relocate.

Bathroom Modifications:

- ▶ Widen the bathroom doorway to 32" - 42" wide. The wider the doorway, the more accessible it will be for him.
- ▶ Install a **tub cut-out** to allow Mark to easily and safely enter and exit the tub, OR



- ▶ Purchase a **swivel seat transfer tub bench** – an absolute must for the safety of Mark and his caregivers.
- ▶ Install a **free-standing safety pole / flip-up hand rail / versaframe** near the tub and toilet to allow Mark to use his upper body strength to his advantage for tub transfers.

Slide Sheets: Purchase slide sheets to help with repositioning Mark in his bed.

Gait belt: A gait belt (with loops) will allow for safer, easier transferring.



Super Trapeze: A transfer lift system over the bed will help Mark and his staff with safe and effective transfers and bed mobility.

Longer-Term Product Solutions:

Bathroom Modifications:

- ▶ Install a **barrier-free (no lip) shower base** with surround and accommodating bars to assist with balance.
- ▶ Alternatively, a **walk-in tub** can help with comfort, stress, and circulation.
- ▶ Install 2 **heating lamps** near the shower to help keep Mark warm when he is out of the shower.
- ▶ Purchase of an **elongated comfort seat toilet with Washlet Unit** will increase independence and allow ease of toilet use.
- ▶ Install **flip-up bars** alongside the toilet to help with transfers.
- ▶ Install a **tilted mirror** in the bathroom to allow easy viewing while seated.

Whole-Home Modifications:

- ▶ The installation of toggle-style light switches and lever-style handles throughout the home will improve ease of use.
- ▶ Install **motion sensing lights with dimmers**. This will allow Mark to adjust the amount of light in rooms when he has a migraine.
- ▶ Use a **MiniLift** when transferring from one surface to another becomes too difficult.

Cost Savings & Outlook:

With a potential cost of over \$156,000 annually for skilled nursing care and \$66,000 for assisted living, staying in the comfort of your own home just makes sense. Living independently at home can have many mental and emotional benefits as well.

Lifeway Mobility has provided Mark with an in-home assessment of safety and function, and has recommended the best solutions to attain the best outcomes.

We are confident that these recommendations will significantly improve Mark's quality of life, as well as that of his caregivers. These products and modifications will help Mark be more comfortable, safe, and independent.