

ADVANCE TO TOPICS

Universal Design: When to Go Above
and Beyond ADA Requirements

Inclusivity, Access and Resilience:

Bobrick’s Planning Guide for
Accessible Restrooms

Designing Inclusive Healthcare Spaces
to Support Neurodiverse Populations

Adult Changing Stations are
Essential to Inclusion

Building for Accessibility: Railing
Systems that Prioritize Inclusivity

5 Common ADA Bathroom
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Accessibility for Everyone in Every Space

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Design for All

Universal Design and accessibility in commercial buildings are crucial for fostering inclusivity among people of all abilities. Compliance with regulations ensures legal adherence and reflects a commitment to social responsibility. By accommodating individuals with disabilities, businesses can broaden their customer base and enhance their reputation. Furthermore, designing with Universal Design principles future-proofs buildings, anticipating evolving accessibility needs over time.

In this eHandbook, you will find a number of practical articles and valuable resources to help you create environments that are accessible, inclusive and adaptable for all individuals, regardless of their age. From designing more inclusive environments for neurodiverse populations to avoiding some of the most common ADA compliance mistakes, this digital resource is packed with information you can put into practice right now. We’ve also included a checklist for how to handle ADA complaints, as well as case studies of real-world applications that apply the principles in this handbook—and a dozen products you may want to consider for your next project.

We hope you find this resource useful as you consider how to design spaces that anyone with any ability can enjoy.

Janelle Penny, Editor-in-Chief, *BUILDINGS*

Jeanie Fitzgerald, Editor-in-Chief, *Architectural Products*

AnnMarie Martin, Editor-in-Chief, *interiors+sources*

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Universal Design: When to Go Above and Beyond ADA Requirements

Universal design concepts deliver full facility access to a broader range of people. Here's why it can be beneficial to build on ADA's minimum requirements.

By Janelle Penny

Anyone working with the built environment knows the risks of not complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act—namely, that you're leaving yourself vulnerable to expensive lawsuits over inaccessible spaces and building features. But what if there was a way to both comply with ADA and ensure maximum accessibility for all kinds of people, even if their needs aren't covered by ADA?

Universal design aims to deliver a maximally accessible facility to the broadest possible range of people. It's not a replacement for following ADA, but it is a smart strategy for anyone who owns or manages a building. Ensuring your facility is as accessible as possible means that more people can benefit from your facility, earning you a premium reputation and paving the way for more people to patronize your tenants.

"It's the intent to reach a broad range of individuals. It's equitable design that works for everyone," said Leslie Suhr, commercial market sector leader at LEO A DALY. "Nothing is modified for a certain type of person. If you're thinking at a broader level, it's not an ADA toilet, it's having every toilet available for everyone as your needs change over time."

Here's what you need to know about universal design and how it interacts with ADA.

WHAT IS UNIVERSAL DESIGN?

Universal design started as a set of seven principles developed by the Center on Universal Design at North Carolina State University in the 1990s, according to the [Whole Building Design Guide](#). Over time, they were

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updated and refined into eight goals. These goals are linked to existing bodies of knowledge and measurable outcomes. The eight goals, released by the University at Buffalo in 2012, are:

- 1. Body fit:** Accommodating a wide range of body sizes and abilities
- 2. Comfort:** Keeping demands within desirable limits of body function
- 3. Awareness:** Ensuring that critical information for use is easily perceived
- 4. Understanding:** Making methods of operation and use intuitive, clear and unambiguous
- 5. Wellness:** Contributing to health promotion, avoidance of disease and prevention of injury
- 6. Social integration:** Treating all groups with dignity and respect
- 7. Personalization:** Incorporating opportunities for choice and the expression of individual preferences
- 8. Cultural appropriateness:** Respecting and reinforcing cultural values and the social, economic and environmental context of any design project

“We think of universal design as a design process that enables and empowers a diverse population by aiming toward three different outcomes—advancing and improving human performance, health and wellness and social participation,” said Dr. Jordana Maisel, a professor of urban planning at the University at Buffalo and leader of research at the [Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access](#) (also known as the IDEA Center). “Those three outcomes guide the goals of universal design that we’ve developed and how we go about implementing universal design.”

Universal design allows you to serve people who don’t necessarily have a disability but could use extra help. Think of a mail carrier pushing a heavy cart of packages, or a parent with a stroller.

“Universal design provides you the flexibility to accommodate people as they change, whether that’s as they age, change jobs, or have children. People change every day,” Suhr explained. “If you’re designing for a very narrow-minded version of what an office building should look like, that’s going to make it hard for people to feel comfortable and welcome when they come in the door, let alone do their jobs to the best of their ability. It’s that flexibility to adapt as people adapt and meet them where they are.”

UNIVERSAL DESIGN VS. ADA

Universal design and ADA are not the same thing, but they’re not mutually exclusive. In fact, universal design concepts can help you build on the minimum requirements ADA stipulates to create a facility that’s more welcoming to all.

“These features don’t just help people with disabilities, they help everyone else too,” said Joshua Klyber, associate principal of accessibility and universal design at Jensen Hughes. “By providing universal design, you can also increase rents and marketability and make your building a more appealing place for leasing tenants.”

In an office building, for example, universal design features might include conference rooms of different sizes and layouts or a variety of space types that allow people to choose where they work best.

“That makes for a much happier employee,” Klyber said. “They’re more productive, they have to deal with fewer distractions and they can operate at a better efficiency based on what their particular needs are.”

THE BOTTOM LINE

Incorporating universal design principles into your facility is a smart strategy for creating an inviting environment—and it doesn’t have to break the bank either. Consider these six takeaways.

- 1. Universal design features aren’t always expensive.** Some building amenities, like putting an elevator into a historic five-story building that wasn’t built to house one, can be pricey, but many universal design features won’t cost more than your usual go-to practices. “For example, seating,” Klyber said. “Instead of providing a single type of seat all the way through a waiting room, just buy two or three kinds of seating from the same series and manufacturer and put them in your waiting space.”
- 2. Involve diverse viewpoints in your design process.** Bring in someone knowledgeable in universal design, and don’t forget to talk to the people who will be using your building, Klyber advised. Involve the communities who will use your building as you design it.
- 3. ADA is not optional.** “Being compliant with current ADA requirements is required,” Klyber said. “No matter how old the building or how much money you have or don’t have, or if things have always been done that way, you have to be compliant with the ADA.”

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- 4. Accessibility is inviting.** “If you start incorporating universal design elements for various communities, you’re going to improve the efficiency of your workers and the people in the space, but also make it more inviting to the public,” Klyber said. “Universal design and accessibility don’t have to look institutional.”
- 5. Universal design is an opportunity, not an obligation or a key to getting your certificate of occupancy.** “It’s important for building owners and facilities managers to understand that by introducing more universal design features, you’re

helping everyone create a healthier, more productive environment,” Maisel said. “See it as a design opportunity rather than just a regulation that needs to be adopted.”

6. Universal design helps futureproof your facility. “As we change, we can’t possibly anticipate what the next set of requirements will be,” Suhr said. “Nobody in 1920 planned for ADA, but now it’s second nature to design for that all over the country. What are we not aware of yet that we can be ready for if we’re more flexible and equitable right now?”

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Inclusivity, Access and Resilience: Much More than Meeting ADA

The Facility Guidelines Institute is evaluating inclusive environments and launching guidelines for adverse events. [Learn more.](#)

By Jane Rohde

The [Facility Guidelines Institute](#) (FGI) released exciting news on the development of two important initiatives: the evaluation of inclusive environments and the launch of the Emergency Conditions Guidelines.

For the 2022 revision cycle of the hospital, outpatient and residential health, care and support guidelines, the tri-chairs from each of the document groups that are part of the Health Guidelines Revision Committee (HGRC) came together to evaluate the opportunity to include information on inclusive environments across the three documents.

EMBRACING UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Starting from the residential health, care and support facilities document group, there has been a movement to provide design information that positively impacts patients and residents in all settings, not only because the majority of patients and residents are 65-plus, but also because what works well from a universal design and inclusive perspective is good for everyone. In this context, inclusivity means not limiting anyone's ability through the design and construction of the built environment in addition to fully understanding the users of any healthcare or long-term care setting to meet their broader needs.

Areas that have been proposed, commented and voted on include starting with the programming and planning process for user accommodation: "In evaluating the users of the facility, inclusive design features should be considered in the context of the intended users' characteristics (e.g., age, body size, ability, cultural background, gender identity)" and under Cultural Responsiveness, "...including the demographics and culture of patients, staff and visitors."

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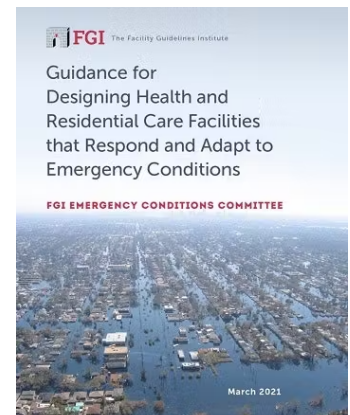
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The outpatient document guideline also includes “use of a universal design process supports the planning and design of inclusive environments by evaluating items such as walking distances, use of color, value contrast, lighting, wayfinding and selection of finishes” along with more detailed information and resources proposed in conjunction with the residential document group. Design recommendations on lighting for building users that have low vision are also included.

Further updates to the residential health, care and support facilities guidelines, which has a focus on person-centered care as a tenet, also include a section on comfort, wellbeing and dignity, which provide information and examples on not only physical access, but physical comfort and psychological, social and spiritual components of comfort and wellbeing. This is reinforced by recommending inclusive design support dignity and remove any and all sense of stigma from the built environment, support privacy, and ease of access to amenities, services and care.

Planning considerations are part of the residential document and utilization of universal design is defined as a process that enables and empowers a diverse population by improving human performance, health and wellness, and social participation ([Steinfeld and Maisel](#), 2012), as included in the work completed at the [University of Buffalo's Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access](#) (IDeA Center).

Overall, the opportunity to be able to support all users within healthcare settings is an exciting addition to the FGI Guidelines that will start in the new publication due out in January 2022 and provide a basis for future guideline development as white papers, resources listed under the FGI Beyond Fundamentals, and continual proposals for future revision cycles of the guidelines.



**EMERGENCY CONDITIONS COMMITTEE
TACKLES ADVERSE EVENT PLANNING**

The other initiative that has been launched by the FGI is the Emergency Conditions White Paper and the draft Guidelines for Emergency Conditions. Using the definition of universal design as a process for inclusivity, the design of environments is based on maintaining

access to services and hardening for resilience in the face of an adverse event, which include both manmade and natural events.

It was found that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on health and residential care facilities and their occupants, coupled with hazards from more frequent and challenging weather-related emergencies, has made plain that more guidance was needed. FGI assembled a 130-person Emergency Conditions Committee (ECC) and formed nine subcommittees to address nine topic areas: safety risk assessment, surge capacity, alternate care sites, modular construction, weather and man-made event resiliency, renovations and future facilities, small and/or rural facilities, residential/adult care settings, and operational considerations.

Although the ECC was convened in response to the pandemic, the committee embraced the opportunity to address design and operational considerations for emergencies that are local (e.g., floods, train derailments, mass shooter incidents), regional (e.g., tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes), and international (e.g., pandemics and other public health emergencies of international concern) in scale. This work was completed in less than a year and has resulted in providing timely information for impacting emergency preparedness, design considerations that will ultimately be incorporated within the FGI guidelines, and a proactive response to adverse events.

Congratulations and thanks are extended to each member of the ECC for volunteering to draft this much-needed guidance during an ongoing pandemic and an ongoing revision cycle (2022) of the existing guidelines for hospitals, outpatient facilities, and residential health, care, and support facilities. As stated from the FGI President, Ken Cates, “On behalf of the FGI Board of Directors, I extend our gratitude to all of the people who have worked on these documents. With the use of this information, we will be better prepared to handle future emergencies and assure improved outcomes for patients, residents and caregivers.”

Article compiled by Jane Rohde, JSR Associates, Inc. based upon information provided by Heather Livingston of the Facility Guidelines Institute and being a tri-chair participating on the 2022 cycle. Many thanks to Addie Abushousheh, tri-chair on the 2022 revision cycle and participant in the ECC, and John Shoesmith, tri-chair on the 2022 revision cycle and lead chair of the residential health, care, and support facilities team for the ECC.

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Bobrick's *Planning Guide for Accessible Restrooms: The Ultimate Resource for Accessible Restroom Design*

Accessibility has come a long way since the first public restroom was introduced in London's Crystal Palace in 1851. Today, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) sets the minimum requirements – both scoping and technical – for newly designed and constructed or altered state and local government facilities, public accommodations and commercial facilities to

be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.

In restroom design this means some of each type of fixture or feature – as well as the installation location – must meet accessibility requirements from two primary sources:

- 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- 2017 Edition of ICC A117.1, Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities

Since 1993, Bobrick Washroom Equipment, Inc. has been committed to providing the most up-to-date information on accessible and compliant restroom design with its *Planning Guide for Accessible Restrooms* (PGAR) to help architects and others understand and apply these standards.

The fourth edition of Bobrick's *Planning Guide for Accessible Restrooms* incorporates important changes from the 2017 Edition of ICC A117.1 2017, *Standard for Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities* and is available for download at www.bobrick.com/pgar.



WHAT'S NEW

In this edition, we've added a table of contents, expanded illustrations and information about the following topics that affect restroom design.

- **Reference to ICC A 117.1 – 2017 Accessibility Standards:** For the first time, the standards make a distinction between dimensional requirements for new buildings and existing buildings.
- **Federal Buildings:** Not covered by the ADA, federal buildings follow the provisions of the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA), and we've created a section that addresses this.
- **Hygiene, Health and Wellness:** After accessibility compliance, restrooms should be designed and maintained to support hygiene best practices.
- **Shifting Demographics:** A significant shift in demographics has occurred since the ADA was put into law.
- **Multigenerational Restrooms:** As the U.S. becomes increasingly diverse, facilities must accommodate by becoming more inclusive.

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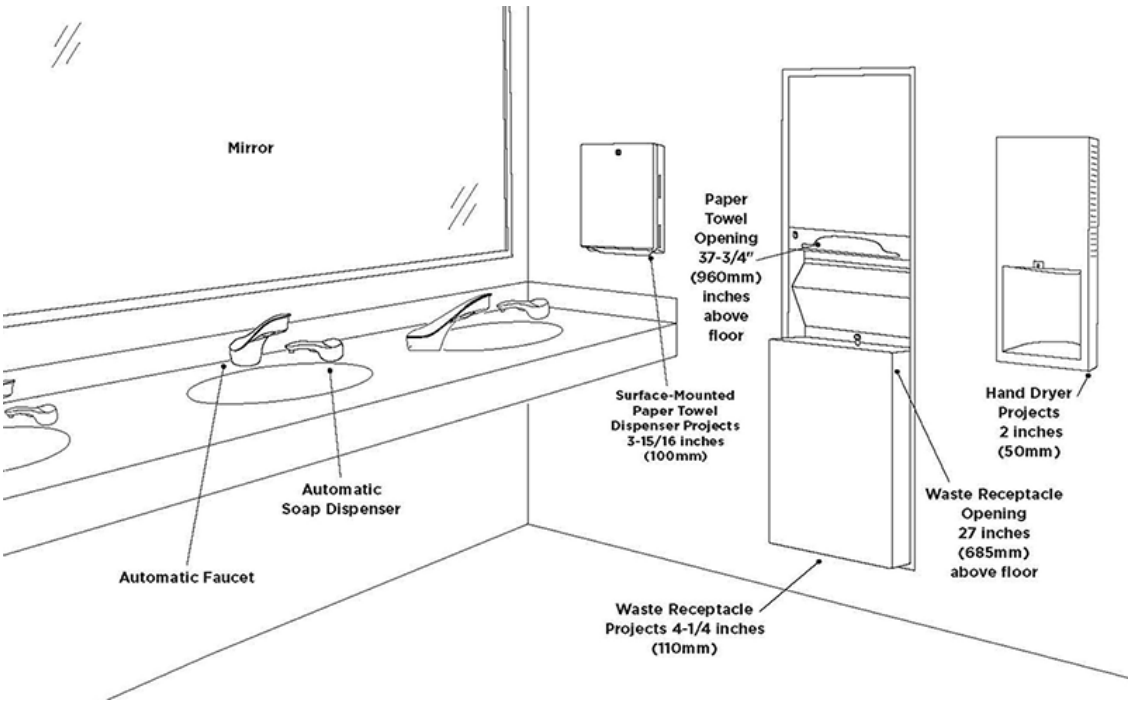
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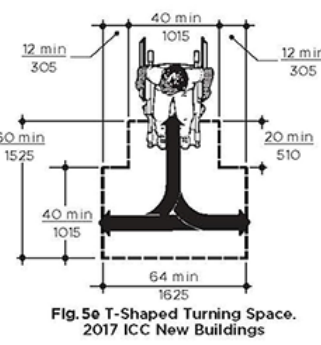
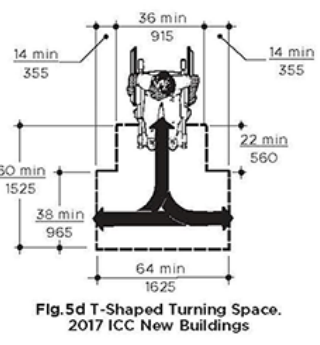
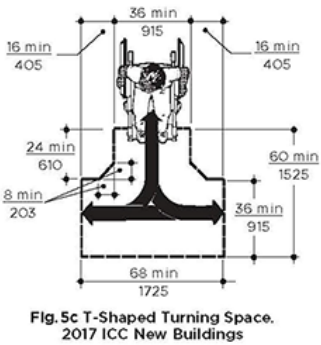
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- **Clear Floor Spaces:** A wide variety of changes have been made to the 2017 ICC Standards for new buildings based on the increased size of three basic space requirements:
 1. Wheelchair clear floor space
 2. Circular turning space
 3. T-shaped wheelchair turning space
- **Obstructed Reach Range Solutions:** The 2017 ICC Standards require altered installation heights and locations for paper towel dispensers and hand dryers.
- **Alternate Wheelchair Accessible Toilet Compartment:** The 2017 ICC Standards include measurements for the Alternate Wheelchair Accessible Toilet Compartment.
- **Ambulatory Accessible Toilet Compartment:** The 2010 ADA Standards and the 2017 ICC Standards provide additional compartment dimensions to accommodate the needs of people who are ambulatory.
- **Toe Clearance:** Toe Clearance has been increased in the 2017 ICC

Standards, while the toe clearance for the 2010 ADA Standards remains the same.

- **Full Height Partitions:** The 2017 ICC Standards for full-height partitions are addressed in detail with illustrations.
- **Exception added to Toilet Tissue Dispensers:** Updated specifications on the placement of toilet tissue dispensers have been included.
- **Individual Toilet Room with Adult Changing Station:** An adjustable height adult changing station can be located in individual toilet rooms.
- **Transfer Shower Compartments:** There are specific dimensions outlined for new and existing buildings to satisfy 2017 ICC and 2010 ADA Standards for clear floor space requirements in front of a transfer shower.
- **Signage:** Specifications are included for using the International Symbol of Accessibility (ISA).
- **Layout figures:** We've provided full illustrations of these new changes with and without Bobrick product recommendations.



More changes in standards for restroom accessibility are inevitable and Bobrick remains committed to helping architects interpret them so we can continue to be a trusted partner in restroom design. In the meantime, be sure download a free copy of the 4th edition *Planning Guide for Accessible Restrooms* at www.bobrick.com/pgar.

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Designing Inclusive Healthcare Spaces to Support Neurodiverse Populations

No more jitters. HOK shows us how to create pediatric healthcare environments that acknowledge and cater to all neurotypes.

By AnnMarie Martin

Going to the doctor is scary. Period. But what designers can do is shatter those pre-conceived notions with healthcare spaces that acknowledge the big feelings and help patients (of all ages) to stand up strong to them. Step one in achieving that is understanding that everyone processes emotions and their surroundings differently.

Neurodiversity can include a variety of diagnoses from autism spectrum disorder to dyslexia and bipolar disorder. Individuals that fall under this category have similar stressors to many neurotypicals but can experience them on a much more heightened plain. [HOK](#) approaches their designs with fresh eyes in all markets to accommodate how everyone processes outside stimuli, not just neurotypical minds, which results in success for every user from the workplace to the classroom and everywhere in between.

Because at the end of the day, inclusive design is universal design.

We spoke with [Karen Freeman](#), practice leader, healthcare and [Laura Poltronieri](#), senior medical planner, to help us break down the dreaded “visit” and hear what types of products, processes and spaces can be integrated at each of these touchpoints below

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to make any healthcare experience as (dare we say it) enjoyable as possible for neurodivergent patients and their families.



Image courtesy of HOK
Wayfinding should be simple and intuitive like the color-based system at the Penn Medicine - Princeton Medical Center in Plainsboro Township, NJ, which starts right at the point of entry.

THE ARRIVAL

Simplified operations and a properly trained staff can make all the difference—and it can even start before any face-to-face interaction.

“Some of our clients provide patient surveys in advance, gathering information that is helpful in better serving neurodivergent individuals. If they know a patient has sensitivities to light or sound, for example, they can customize the space to meet their needs. These simple moves have a tremendous impact on the quality and personalization of care,” explained Poltronieri.

For some patients, order and schedule is crucial, so videos can also be used to educate them on what they will see and experience when they arrive at the facility. Some children’s hospitals will invite kids and their families in prior to a surgery to tour the space. Elements that can help demystify such

procedures might be an MRI machine for a doll or child-sized exam room in a playroom or waiting area, so they know what to expect.

Especially in an entryway, overwhelming colors, light and activity should be avoided. A secondary entrance and set of elevators could be considered to allow for a less stimulating introduction to the space. Clients can be sold on these moves with the prospect of having a very well-oiled machine—patients that are calm and comfortable allow staff to do their jobs in a much more efficient and meaningful manner.

THE WAITING



Image by Michael Robinson
The Children’s Place playroom in Kansas City, Missouri is simple with wide open space to move, lots of daylight and no overwhelming colors or patterns.

Wayfinding is also an important consideration and must be intuitive and again, simple. Freeman and Poltronieri point to the Penn Medicine - Princeton Medical Center in Plainsboro Township, NJ, where they used colors to define departments, like cardiac, oncology and more, helping individuals quickly and easily orient themselves.

Play spaces that address all sensory needs from seekers to avoidance should be considered, as well as therapeutic seating options from swings to

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rocking chairs. Pet therapy zones can also make for an experience that get children excited for repeat visits. Small enclosures like those that populate the waiting room at Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital at Stanford in Palo Alto, Calif. return a sense of control back into the hands of patients, giving them a healthy form of escape.

Activity carts and child life specialists to facilitate their use also play an important role in waiting areas. They’re being used for arts and crafts, sensory activities and even bereavement or end-of-life activities such as honoring a child with a handprint, footprint or scrapbook.

THE APPOINTMENT

Autonomy is the name of the game here. The more control a patient has over their environment, the more productive and effective their interactions with staff and their doctors will be. So, providing access to individual controls over elements such as temperature, sound and light are a strong focus for HOK in providing more inclusive healthcare environments.

LED lighting is inexpensive and long-lasting, comes in different shapes, formats and colors and most importantly can be dimmable and quiet.

Freeman and Poltronieri advise against automatic flush valves on toilets as it can be very alarming for children. They also report seeing fewer and fewer hospitals using overhead paging technology and opting instead for individual paging systems, some with badges and a call button with RFDI tracking. It allows staff to quickly call security or for reinforcements without contributing to overhead noise.

THE FOLLOW-UP

Inject some fun. Providing other venues to gather, be and grow gives patients and their families other things to look forward to and can show children especially that certain facilities do not simply exist for addressing an ailment or receiving treatment for something scary.



The waiting room at Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital at Stanford in Palo Alto, Calif features insets and seating enclosures where patients can feel protected and cradled.

Alternative therapy spaces such as those for art, music and gardening can change a patient’s neuropathways to not be programmed immediately to a stress reaction for every visit. The Sidney & Lois Eskenazi Hospital’s outpatient center in Indianapolis features The Sky Farm—a rooftop garden for patients, staff and the community to engage with each other and learn about produce.

Promoting wellness and wellness education should always be a priority, with access to nutritious food and natural light.

“From a project management standpoint, one of our biggest challenges is advocating for design decisions that are different from the status quo,” said Freeman.

“We always explain to our clients that what is good for neurodiverse patients—clarity, control, outdoor access—is actually good for all patients. They know that every design decision they make has an impact on the project goals, budget and timeline. If we can make the case for sensitive design solutions that improve the experience for all, the focus shifts from concerns about cost and schedule to the potential positive impact of these choices.”

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Building for Accessibility: Railing Systems that Prioritize Inclusivity

Railings establish safety, support and guidance for anyone in your facility. But are your railings ADA compliant? These must-know accessibility tips will ensure your railings meet requirements.

By Briana Dubois

Railing systems are an essential element of any building, providing safety, support, and guidance to occupants. However, railings can do more than just provide physical assistance—they can also promote a sense of inclusivity for individuals from all walks of life.

As such, ensuring your next project incorporates the right railing systems is not only important for ADA compliance, but also critical for making the structure accessible and welcoming to everyone. Keep reading as we explore some of the most important factors to consider for modern commercial railing systems.

ADA COMPLIANCE AND RAILING SYSTEMS

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) establishes design standards to ensure equal access to public spaces and facilities for individuals with disabilities. When it comes to railing systems, the ADA outlines specific requirements regarding height, grip and placement.

- **Height:** Railings must be between 34 to 38 inches above the walking surface. This range allows individuals of various heights to find a comfortable and secure grip.
- **Grip:** The shape must be easy to grasp and accommodate different hand sizes. Round, oval or D-shaped rails are often recommended.
- **Placement:** Railings must be continuous along ramps, stairs and elevated surfaces. Interruptions or gaps in the railing system can present a hazard to individuals who rely on them for support.

By ensuring that the correct specifications are addressed prior to installing a commercial railing system, building owners can help avoid costly rework scenarios to bring their facility into ADA compliance.

RAILING SYSTEMS FOR ACCESSIBILITY

When discussing railing systems for commercial buildings, people immediately think of staircase railings and balcony railings. However, there are actually numerous types of railing systems that can enhance

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the functionality of your structure and promote accessibility and inclusivity in your building design.

- **Handrails:** Handrails along corridors, walls and ramps provide support and guidance for individuals with mobility challenges.
- **Guardrails:** These railings prevent falls from elevated surfaces such as balconies, mezzanines and platforms.
- **Stair railings:** Railings on both sides of stairs offer additional support and stability when ascending or descending, in addition to protecting walkers from going over the edge.
- **Grab bars:** These horizontal or diagonal bars in restrooms, showers and other high-risk areas provide additional support and balance.

By considering the various forms that commercial railings can take, building owners can ensure optimal comfort and functionality for all patrons.

ACCESSIBLE RAILINGS FOR SPECIFIC NEEDS

Depending on the type of building that you operate, it is important to consider the guests who are likely to frequent your facility. Different populations and specific needs will benefit from thoughtful railing design.

- **Children and the elderly:** Consider lower railings for children and higher railings in combination with handrails for the elderly.
- **Visually impaired:** Railings with contrasting colors or textures can help visually impaired individuals better perceive their surroundings.
- **Individuals with cognitive disabilities:** Simple and intuitive railing designs can provide clarity and ease of navigation.

Understand that these are just a few of the many diverse populations that are likely to visit your building, so be mindful of choosing the best railing systems to accommodate as diverse a demographic as possible.

RAILING MATERIALS AND DESIGN

The right railing materials and design can contribute to the durability, functionality, and aesthetics of your railing system. Here are some factors to consider:

- **Durability:** Choose materials that are resistant to corrosion, wear and tear. Stainless steel, aluminum and powder-coated metals

are popular choices for both interior and exterior applications. Durable materials can lower repair costs and reduce the lifetime cost of ownership for a railing system.

- **Design:** Consider the overall design of your building and choose railings that complement the architecture. Contemporary, traditional or minimalist designs are available to suit different tastes. Glass railings are becoming increasingly popular because they work well with many modern designs and help promote the flow of natural sunlight to create a brighter, more inviting ambiance.
- **Installation:** Railing systems should be installed by qualified professionals to ensure proper anchoring and stability.
- **Maintenance:** Regular maintenance is crucial to ensuring the safety and longevity of your railing system. Inspect railings for any signs of damage or wear and take prompt action to address any issues.

By choosing the right railing materials and designs, buildings can ensure the seamless blend of form and function to guarantee a structure that is not only safe and accessible, but aesthetically stunning as well.

CHOOSE THE BEST RAILING SYSTEMS FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY

Railing systems are more than just safety features; they play a vital role in creating an inclusive and accessible environment.

“Railing systems that prioritize inclusivity are not just structures; they’re pathways to equality and accessibility,” says Briana Dubois of [VIVA Railings](#). “At the heart of design should be the commitment to creating spaces that everyone can navigate with dignity and ease. Inclusivity is not an option; it’s the foundation upon which we build a more accessible and interconnected world.”

By incorporating the right railing systems into your building design from the start, you can promote inclusivity, adhere to ADA guidelines and provide a safe and comfortable experience for everyone who visits or works in your building.

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Adult Changing Stations are Essential to Inclusion

In recent years, strides have been made toward inclusivity and accessibility in architectural and interior design. From ramps and elevators to braille signage, there's a growing awareness that public buildings need to accommodate the diverse needs of all individuals. While we celebrate these advancements, it's crucial to acknowledge that there's still progress to be made.

When it comes to inclusiveness in buildings, an often-overlooked group is adolescents and adults with disabilities that prevent them from using standard public restrooms. Even restrooms with handicap and ambulatory stalls are not able to accommodate their needs. They usually require a caretaker and thus need a dedicated washroom. These types of washrooms offer the additional time and privacy these individuals and their caretakers need.

Sadly, many public buildings such as museums, stadiums, airports, and schools do not offer these resources. In many cases, these individuals and their caretakers or families are never able to use these buildings or participate in associated activities and events such as sporting events, performances, or field trips.

Adding a changing spaces restroom dedicated to the special needs of these types of individuals and their caregivers is an excellent way to make a building more accessible to all people. Within this type of restroom, an adult changing station with a strong weight capacity and a height-adjustable table is essential.

EMPOWERING CAREGIVERS AND INDIVIDUALS

Reflecting a deeper understanding and appreciation of the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities and their families and caregivers, legislation on the local and national levels has begun to evolve along with restroom and building design. Daily activities that many take for granted pose significant challenges for those with disabilities, such as finding proper facilities for changing when away from home. The absence of appropriate accommodations – like adult changing stations – can limit the ability for individuals with disabilities to participate in public life, whether traveling and attending events or visiting cultural institutions.

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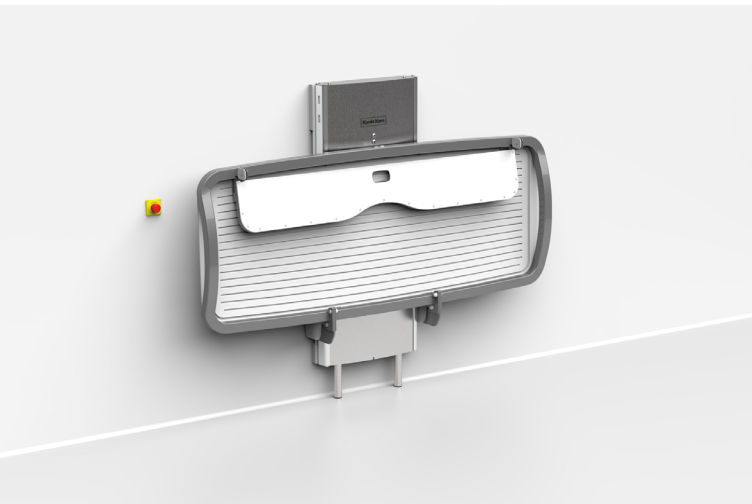
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Adult Changing Stations are Essential to Inclusion

This is particularly evident in the latest legislation trends about Adult Changing Stations. States like California, Arizona, New Hampshire and, most recently, Minnesota have passed laws mandating the inclusion of adult changing stations in public buildings. Furthermore, the International Code Council has updated the 2024 International Building Code to require adult changing stations in various occupancies, reflecting a broader recognition of the importance of inclusive spaces in venues that should be accessible to all.



THE INNOVATION
OF KOALA KARE'S
KB3000-AHL

Enter designs like the KB3000-AHL from Koala Kare, a product created to meet the needs of families and caregivers of individuals with disabilities. It can be a lifeline connecting those

with special needs and disabilities to the public locations that they want and need to be able to visit. Its innovative design boasts a contemporary aesthetic coupled with exceptional safety features, durability, and keen consideration for both the cared for and the caregiver.

DURABILITY AND SAFETY ASSURANCE

Functionality is at the heart of the KB3000-AHL. The powered height adjustment for its table ranges from 12" to 41" from the floor to allow for safe transfer and reduce undue strain on the caregiver. This adjustment

is done by the caretaker from either of two easy to access sets of buttons. The KB3000 also has a weight capacity of up to 500 lbs. to safely accommodate a wide range of patrons. Curves in the changing surface frame allow for greater comfort when in use.



DURABILITY AND MAINTENANCE

Koala Kare's adult changing station meets these demands robustly. Constructed from 2" powder-coated steel tubing and outfitted with a vandal-resistant surface, the KB3000-AHL is built to last and keep up with rigorous use in public facilities without the risk of tampering or degradation.

The crevice-free changing surface made of durable plastic reduces the buildup of contaminants. It is also easy to wipe or even hose-down, thanks to its rust-proof frame.

INCLUSIVE DESIGN IS CRUCIAL

Accessibility should not be an afterthought – implementing solutions like a changing spaces restroom with an adult changing station isn't just a move toward modernity, it is a way to create more welcoming places to everyone. Adult changing stations represent just one of many steps architects can take to achieve truly inclusive design – design that doesn't turn people away. Design that welcomes everyone and ultimately brings us together in the shared spaces we call our own.

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AN INCLUSION ESSENTIAL

Adult changing stations help ensure designs
for public places like stadiums, zoos and airports
are inclusive for people with disabilities.

The KB3000 has essential features such as
powered height adjustment, 500 lbs. load
capacity, and a vandal resistant changing surface.

Koala Kare

Learn more: www.koalabear.com



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5 Common ADA Bathroom Compliance Mistakes

Find 5 ways your bathroom may be failing ADA compliance and how to pay for the updates.

By Janelle Penny

ADA compliance applies to every part of your building, but the restroom can be especially tricky to get right when you compare its relatively small space to the number of objectives you’re required to meet.

Whether you started with a faulty design, your contractors missed the mark, or you just didn’t realize you moved a trashcan into the wheelchair turning radius, it’s crucial that you identify any noncompliant areas now and address them.

“It’s a common problem because business owners rely on architects and engineers to get this right, and in the end, it’s in the civil rights realm, not building code,” notes David Meihls, Principal Consultant for ADA Consultants of Indiana. “If you don’t consult with an ADA expert and have your business reviewed, there’s a high chance of noncompliance because compliance requires so many intricate moving parts.”

Facilities managers aren’t typically experts in all things ADA, but the facilities team’s handling of ADA compliance – or noncompliance – may make the difference between a verbal complaint vs. a lawsuit. Understand the most common violations of the [ADA compliance guidelines](#) and deal with complaints correctly from the start.



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WHY IS IMPORTANT FOR BATHROOMS TO MEET ADA?

To understand why ADA compliance in restrooms is such a worrisome issue for both building owners and guests with disabilities, put yourself in the user's shoes. You may be able to find a workaround for a ramp that's a little too steep, but not being able to get into a stall with a mobility aid is another hurdle altogether.

"When a person is denied access to use the restroom, you are at a much greater risk of that person not only being denied access, but being thoroughly ticked off," Meihls explains. "Let's say he ends up having an accident and has to go home, take a shower, change his clothes, all of that stuff. There's a pretty good chance he's going to sue, whereas if someone just had to help him get up a curb ramp, that's not as big a deal. I think that's why restrooms are such a hot-button issue."

If you were fortunate enough to discover an incident of noncompliance on your own, move quickly to get the issue fixed before you receive a complaint – or worse, a lawsuit. On the other hand, if you're made aware of the problem because a person with a disability has run into complications gaining access, Meihls suggests starting with compassion and sincerity, then rectifying the problem as quickly as possible.

"Acknowledge that the person has an issue and let them know you're aware. If you weren't aware before, tell them you'll look into what you can do and ask if there's anything you can do right now to assist them," Meihls recommends. "Thank you for bringing this to our attention. We'll investigate it further and try to get it fixed. In the meantime, what can I do to help you have a better experience right now?"

When you investigate, it's also important to document everything, from the ADA compliance requirement you're accused of violating to the real-life conditions of the noncompliant space. Take photos of the area referenced in the complaint and have the areas measured, preferably by an architect or another building professional who's an ADA compliance expert, recommends Dan Chancey, BOMA Fellow and Senior Vice President, Asset Management, for Cushman & Wakefield/Commercial Advisors.

Whatever you do, don't ignore it and hope it will go away, and don't try to save money by dealing with it on your own. Consultants are paid to be experts on this topic, so don't be afraid to use their expertise.

"People are afraid to hire experts and say, 'We don't need them, we can figure this out ourselves.' Well, maybe you can, but you're really taking a risk and with ADA, it's not worth the risk," Chancey explains. "Engage a good architect who can help you navigate those waters. Most property management folks know a little bit about a lot of things, but an architect knows a lot about certain focus areas, and that's what you need here."

5 COMMON ADA RESTROOM COMPLIANCE MISTAKES

Certain ADA compliance issues seem to crop up more frequently than others, but it's important to note that the following is not an exhaustive list. To see all of the ADA compliance requirements, see the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design at www.ada.gov.

- 1. Mirror height:** "Almost always, the mirror will be more than 40 inches above the floor. You have to be a really tall person in a wheelchair to see yourself in a mirror if it's more than 40 inches high," explained Meihls. "Often it's 10 to 18 inches too high and it's clear that they have not thought about a person in a wheelchair."
- 2. Grab bars:** All bars must also have at least an inch and a half of clear space in every direction and it's common for a toilet paper dispenser to be installed too close, Meihls added.
- 3. Toilet stalls:** Toilets must be located within 16-18 inches from the centerline of the wall, Meihls said. More or less than that makes maneuvering difficult. Toilet flush levers are also supposed to be installed on the open side of the stall so that the user doesn't have to reach over the toilet, Meihls added. However, if your toilet is violating this rule, you may be able to just replace the tank rather than the entire unit.
- 4. Sinks:** The 1991 requirements allowed the sink to butt into the



maneuvering space required for the toilet, but the 2010 update prohibits that, so older buildings often run into trouble. "The toilet now has to be within a 60-inch clear space and the sink must be installed beyond that area," says Meihls.

Sinks are frequently too tall as well, especially base cabinet models,

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Meihls adds: “Sinks are often installed higher than 34 inches. Standard base cabinets are 36 inches high – you have to special order to get one that’s 34 inches high, so that’s a common problem.”



5. Doors: Non-compliant bathrooms will sometimes have the door installed improperly so that it swings into the bathroom instead of outward, Meihls says: “When you do that, you take away the turning clearance so a person in a wheelchair can’t shut the door. Door closers often require more than 5 pounds of force to open, and the last thing you need if you’re in a hurry to get there is to be hindered by a door that’s too heavy to open.”

ADA COMPLIANCE MISCONCEPTIONS

These common pitfalls can spell trouble for ADA compliance, not just in restrooms, but in the rest of your facility. If any of these sound familiar, you may be at risk of additional complaints, lawsuits or fines.

“No people with disabilities use this space.”

Making assumptions can be your downfall even if your restroom is literally on top of a mountain, Meihls explains.

“There was a lawsuit in the late ‘90s involving a group of about 10 people on the Appalachian Trail,” Meihls says. “This is a federally funded trail and one of the people in the group was in a wheelchair.

They were about 10,000 feet up and everyone had to use the bathroom, and the only bathroom was this toilet mounted on a base that was just sitting out in the open. Everyone could use it except for the guy in the wheelchair, who then sued the federal government over it. They came back and said, ‘Even if we’re installing toilets at 10,000 feet, we can’t assume that a person in a wheelchair isn’t going to make this climb’ because he did. If you service the public, no matter what your business is, you have to include people with disabilities.”

Spaces that are normally closed to non-members, like churches, can also run into trouble here, Meihls adds. Places of worship are only exempt from ADA if they don’t allow non-members to use the space. However, many

have gathering spaces that can be rented out for weddings, graduations and other events, which means they must abide by ADA. Meihls suggests consulting the Department of Justice’s *A Primer for Small Business* at www.ada.gov to understand some of the basics of accessibility, ADA compliance, and when a building does and doesn’t have to comply.

“My local code official said my building is close enough.”

ADA compliance is a civil rights law, not a regular building code, and it offers zero variance. “On a normal code, if the distance between two doors is a half-inch off, the code inspector may decide to say ‘I know you’re putting these doors as far as you can from each other, so for this particular application, you’re satisfying the code in my book’ and sign off on it,” explains Chancey. “They’ll even sign off on ADA, but that doesn’t get you off the hook. If you miss an ADA requirement by a half inch or three-quarters of an inch, you’ll lose with the Justice Department.”

“If someone complains about ADA compliance later, I can just fix it then.”

The law has no cure period, Chancey explains. That means that if you receive a complaint, you’re vulnerable to a lawsuit right away because there’s no grace period giving you a certain amount of time to rectify the problem. “If it’s wrong on day one, someone can sue you on day two,” Chancey says. “BOMA is advocating for a cure period so you have an opportunity to deal with the discrepancy before you get sued.”

HOW DO I PAY FOR ADA COMPLIANCE BATHROOM UPGRADES?

There are two tax incentives that can help defray the cost of making businesses accessible to people with disabilities.

Disabled Access Credit

What it is: 50% of expenditures between \$250 and \$10,250, with a maximum benefit of \$5,000. The credit amount is subtracted from your company’s total tax liability. This credit is available every year.

Who can claim it: Businesses with up to \$1 million in revenue or 30 or fewer full-time employees.

“The most important thing that a building manager, owner or landlord can do is engage with an architect that knows the ADA compliance well,” Chancey adds. “I need to know that I’ve hired someone who’s not just going to design or draw floor plans, but an architect that really understands the ins and outs of ADA in addition to other codes. That’s where a lot of people make mistakes.”

Use it for: Printing materials in accessible formats, removal of barriers, purchasing adaptive equipment or modifying existing equipment, interpreters and readers, consulting fees and more.

Barrier Removal Tax Deduction

What it is: Annual deduction of up to \$15,000 for expenses incurred to remove physical, structural and transportation barriers for people with disabilities in the workplace. The

amount spent is subtracted from your business’s income, lowering the amount of income you’ll be taxed on.

Who can claim it: Any business.

Use it for: Removing existing architectural barriers by providing accessible alternatives, such as parking spaces, ramps, curb cuts, phones, water fountains, restrooms and walkways. Not applicable to new construction, complete renovations or normal replacement of depreciated property.



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ADA Elevators: What Are the Requirements?

Avoid liability by reviewing the ADA requirements for elevators in both new and existing buildings, and read about possible instances in which your elevator could be non-compliant. Learn more.

By Sarah Kloepple

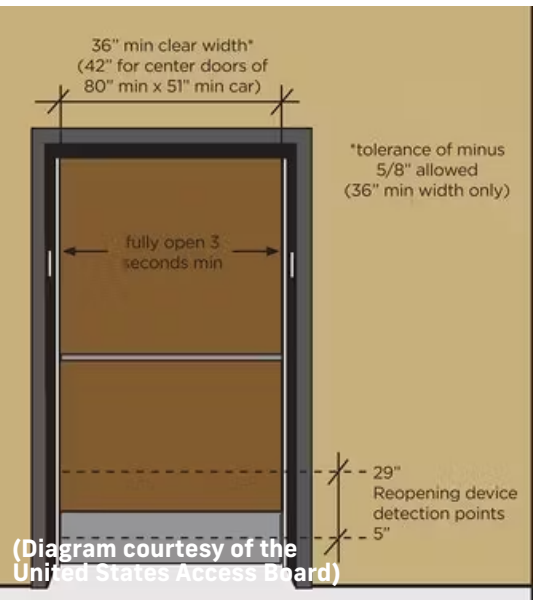
In a multistory building, elevators are one of the most common ways to provide access for tenants and visitors—and they're often one of the first accessibility elements added to a new building.

In new and existing buildings, elevators must conform to the guidelines set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which was signed into law in 1990 and ensures that people with disabilities receive reasonable accommodations in order to participate in society—including access to public and commercial buildings.

Your elevators might be exempt from ADA compliance if your building has fewer than three stories or fewer than 3,000 square feet per floor. However, the exemption doesn't apply if your building is a:

- Professional office of a health care provider
- Public transit station
- Airport passenger terminal
- Shopping center or mall

Principal consultant of ADA Consulting of Indiana David Meihls says most elevators today are manufactured to be ADA compliant. But it's a smart business move to know the ADA elevator requirements to provide the best experience for your tenants and their clients—and to avoid the time and expense of remodeling later.



ADA REQUIREMENTS FOR ELEVATORS

When purchasing an elevator or evaluating an existing installation, review the [elevator ADA requirements](#) to ensure your system is compliant.

These requirements state that:

- Elevator must be easily accessible in a public space (instead of, for example, a cramped hallway)
- Doors must remain fully open for at least three seconds
- Call buttons are a minimum of 0.75 inches in diameter

- Button heights must be centered 42 inches from the floor
- Car must be at least 51 inches deep and at least 68 inches wide
- Door width must be at least 36 inches

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ADA Elevators: What Are the Requirements?

- Braille must be below or next to floor numbers on the control panel
- Automatic verbal announcement of stop or non-verbal audible signal of passed floors and stops must be used
- Two-way communication must be available in elevator cabs that deaf/blind users can use
- Emergency controls must be grouped at the bottom of the elevator control panel and have their centerlines no less than 35 inches above the finish floor

Many of these requirements are standard across all types of elevators—but certain systems can have requirements unique to their [technology](#).

DESTINATION-ORIENTED ELEVATORS

Destination-oriented elevators group passengers for the same destination to reduce wait and travel times. When using a destination-oriented elevator, an occupant calls an elevator car by first indicating which floor they need, usually on a keypad. Lobby indicators will then tell the occupant which car to use to get to their destination.

The ADA says these types of elevators are held to the same specifications as a traditional passenger elevator—but requirements specific to destination-oriented elevators include:

- Audible and visible differentiation of each elevator in an elevator bank (so occupants easily know which one to use)
- Visual display of each floor at which a car has been programmed to stop
- Automatic verbal announcement of each car stop

LIMITED USE/LIMITED APPLICATION ELEVATORS

A limited use/limited application elevator (also known as a LULA) is smaller and slower than a traditional passenger elevator you'd find in a large commercial building. LULAs are designed for low occupancy and typically will only take an occupant up one or two stories, says Meihls. They're often found in churches, schools, libraries and small businesses.

LULAs can also be added as a way to improve accessibility in existing buildings. When you alter, renovate or expand your building, the ADA's [2010 Standards for Accessible Design](#) (the most recent version) requires the removal of "accessibility barriers in existing places of public accommodation when doing so is readily achievable" to be compliant.

The ADA defines "readily achievable" as "without much difficulty or expense." But how can you, as a building owner, decide what needs to be done?

"One effective approach is to conduct a 'self-evaluation' of the facility to identify existing barriers," the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) states on the [ADA website](#).

A self-assessment isn't required by the ADA, says the DOJ, but it's worth its weight in identifying the most efficient ways to provide access that *is* required—and in preventing liability. It also serves "as evidence of a good faith effort to comply with the barrier removal requirements of the ADA," notes the DOJ. An assessment should include individuals with disabilities or the organizations that represent them.

According to the [ADA](#), LULAs are, for the most part, held to the same standards as traditional elevators. But they also operate differently—with smaller car sizes, slower speeds and shorter travel distances.

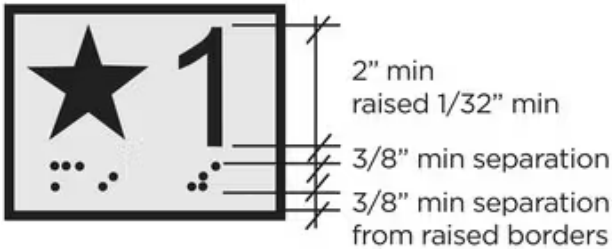
BUILDINGS CHECKLIST

How to Handle ADA Complaints Exclusive Checklist

Did you know the most crucial steps are the ones you take right away after receiving a complaint? Ignoring the situation could set you up for a lawsuit. Be proactive with this [checklist](#) >>

(UN)COMMON ADA VIOLATIONS

Although Meihls says he rarely encounters ADA violations when inspecting elevators, it does still happen.



"Some rare times I will find that the ground floor, main exit level is not indicated with a star [on the control panel]," he explains.

"The main exit level requires the star symbol, and it needs to be raised with Braille." (Diagram courtesy of the United States Access Board)

Another violation he often sees is the lack of areas of refuge within a building. Areas of refuge are designated locations in a building, often adjacent to or within a stairway, for occupants to wait during an emergency when evacuation is not safe or possible.

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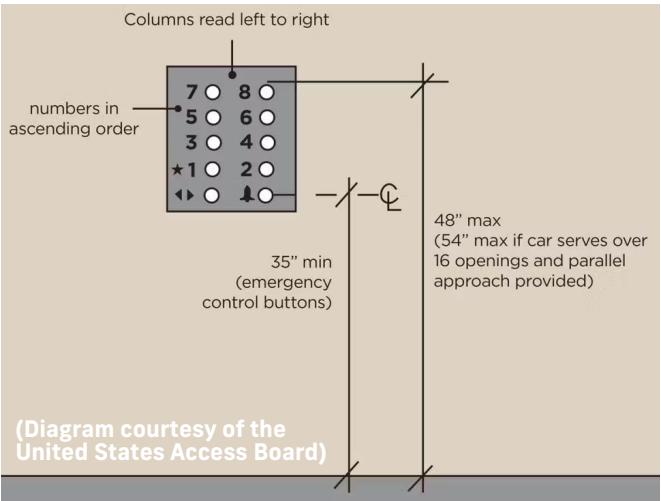
ADA Elevators: What Are the Requirements?

The areas should feature enough space for a wheelchair (30-inches-by-48-inches minimum), and there should be one for every 200 occupants. They should also feature a two-way emergency communication system.

Although this violation doesn't include elevators directly, these areas are often needed when elevators are not working in the case of an emergency, and therefore not an option for people with disabilities to use to exit the building.

"Often these aren't included in older facilities," Meihls says, adding: "We need to have a place for a person with a disability to go to, and first responders should be trained to know where to look for them."

The International Building Code (IBC) says areas of refuge aren't required if facilities are equipped throughout with an automated sprinkler system.



UPWARD ELEVATOR TRENDS TAKING OVER THE INDUSTRY

The elevator industry is going through some exciting innovations, including fitting more elevators into fewer shafts that operate independently from each other.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR CODE CHANGES

If you're unsure about whether or not the elevators in your buildings are up to code, ask your elevator service provider to survey the elevators and submit a list of recommended changes. An elevator or ADA/accessibility consulting group could conduct a similar survey.

At time of publication, Meihls wasn't aware of any upcoming code changes regarding elevators. He reiterates that when it comes to ADA compliancy, elevators excel.

"It's an example as to how well they have trained their people throughout their industry," he says. "In larger commercial jobs, the elevator is rarely a component I have to worry about."

For general accessibility, the Institute for Human Centered Design has an updated, downloadable [ADA checklist](#) for existing facilities to help guide owners in the process of making their facility accessible—and enjoyable—for all.

This article was originally published April 30, 2009 by Leah B. Garris, former managing editor for Buildings. It was updated on November 5, 2019 by Sarah Kloepple, staff writer for Buildings.

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Signage that Speaks: Enhancing Accessibility in Your Facility

Ensuring your facility is accessible to all individuals is not just a moral imperative but also a legal requirement. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates specific signage regulations to create an inclusive environment for people with disabilities. As a facility manager or business owner, understanding and implementing these regulations is crucial for compliance and enhancing the overall accessibility of your establishment.

ADA signage is essential for making sure people with disabilities can navigate your facility safely and effectively. This includes using raised characters and Braille, ensuring that signs are placed in accessible locations, and using non-glare finishes and contrasting colors to make signs more readable. The placement of signs, such as mounting them on the latch side of doors and ensuring clear floor space, is also important for accessibility.

Overhead and projection signs should have appropriately sized characters to ensure visibility from a distance, and they must be placed high enough to avoid obstruction. Additionally, pictograms should be used within a designated field area and provide a clear, non-glare contrast with the background.

Why does this matter? ADA-compliant signage enhances the user experience for everyone and demonstrates your commitment to inclusivity and accessibility. Failure to comply with these regulations can result in legal consequences and damage to your organization's reputation.



At Inpro, we specialize in creating ADA-compliant signage solutions that meet regulatory standards and enhance the accessibility of your facility. Contact us today to discover how our expert team can help you achieve compliance and foster an inclusive environment.

ADA REGULATIONS AND POLICIES FOR WALL PROTECTION IN COMMERCIAL SPACES

Ensuring ADA compliance is crucial in commercial spaces, especially healthcare facilities where safety and accessibility are top priorities. The ADA outlines guidelines to make public spaces accessible for individuals with disabilities, and wall protection is a key component in achieving this.

Handrails are the unsung heroes of ADA-compliant facilities, offering necessary support and stability for individuals with mobility challenges. According to ADA guidelines, handrails must be continuous along both

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sides of stairs and ramps, with extensions at the top and bottom to facilitate transitions. They should be mounted between 34 and 38 inches above the floor and be easy to grasp, with a circular cross-section diameter of 1.25 to 2 inches. Handrails must also be free of obstructions and have a smooth surface to prevent injuries.



Wall guards and protective wall coverings are the silent guardians of high-traffic areas, maintaining structural integrity and ensuring longevity. ADA regulations stipulate that these elements should not protrude more than 4 inches into walkways, thereby avoiding any impediments or hazards for individuals using wheelchairs or other mobility aids.

Inpro offers a vast lineup of ADA-compliant wall protection solutions, including handrails, wall guards, and decorative yet durable wall coverings. These products are designed to enhance safety, meet regulatory standards, and add a touch of aesthetic sophistication to commercial spaces. Our handrails provide robust support, while our wall guards and coverings safeguard against damage and ensure smooth navigation for all building occupants. Inpro's experts can help you choose the right ADA-compliant product. Whether for new construction or updating an existing facility, our professionals guide you through the selection process to meet all regulations and standards.



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Achieve ADA Excellence with Inpro's Cutting-Edge Solutions.

Innovative Products for Enhanced Accessibility

At Inpro, we understand the paramount importance of accessibility and inclusivity in today's world. Our ADA Product Solutions are meticulously designed to meet all compliance standards, ensuring that every individual, regardless of their abilities, has safe and reliable access to various facilities. We take pride in our comprehensive range of products, from handrails that offer stability to signage that provides clear and vital information. In commercial spaces, our solutions are crafted to enhance accessibility and promote inclusivity, making a positive impact on the lives of everyone.

Visit [inpro.com](https://www.inpro.com) to learn more and ensure your facility meets ADA standards today!



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Free Checklist: How to Handle ADA Complaints

The most crucial steps for dealing with ADA complaints are the ones you take right after receiving the complaint. Follow these tips for a compassionate, thorough response that could make a difference.



Hopefully, you never have to worry about an ADA violation complaint. But what if you do? Did you know the most crucial steps are the ones you take right away after receiving a complaint? Ignoring the situation could set you up for a lawsuit.

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RIGHT AWAY

Understand the nature of the complaint.

Are you being sued, or is someone pointing something out to you?

Take the complaint seriously. If it is a demand letter, read it. If it is a visitor bringing something to your attention, listen to them. Don't fail to respond.

Offer to assist the visitor with gaining access. Do everything you can to satisfy the person complaining. For example, if someone is telling you a ramp is too steep, offer to roll them up the ramp yourself.

Don't offer to settle immediately. It can be tempting to agree with the complainant in hopes that they will decide not to sue, but that is often counterproductive. The claim might not include all the areas that are out of compliance.

AFTER YOUR INITIAL RESPONSE

Investigate independently. After you have read the written complaint or the person lodging a verbal complaint has left, find the ADA requirements you're accused of violating. Examine the conditions that led to the complaint.

Take pictures from multiple angles of the conditions named in the claim. If there were alternatives available, such as an alternate accessible entrance, document that too.

Reach out to a professional who can help. Good help is expensive, but defending yourself against an ADA claim is not a place to cut corners. Have an ADA expert do any needed measurements to determine whether the complaint is valid.

Call a lawyer if you are served with a lawsuit. Find a legal professional who can handle an ADA suit and provide them with any photos you took. The National Federation of Independent Business recommends starting with your insurance carrier or landlord (if you rent) to see if they provide defense counsel.

Fix the problem. ADA doesn't have a cure period, so the longer you wait to fix the issue, the more vulnerable you are to another complaint or lawsuit. Bring in an architect who is well-versed in ADA and accessible design and/or an ADA consultant who can find everything that is non-compliant.

PROTECT YOURSELF

Include architectural services in your operational budget for future accessibility questions. Have someone you can call about whether aspects of your building meet the requirements.

Be picky with hiring professionals. Too many people ask about an architect's cost per square foot rather than how engaged they are with ADA and accessible design.

Post a "No Photography" sign prohibiting photography without management's written approval. This deters drive-by lawsuits, according to the National Federation of Independent Business.

Look into incentives to lower the cost of compliance. The cost of alterations may entitle you to a tax credit in addition to the usual deductions for business expenses. Your state may also offer additional tax incentives for making your business ADA compliant.

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Improving ADA- Compatible Access to Florida's Premier Historic Hotel

By AP Staff

Since its opening in 1928, the Don CeSar hotel, in St. Pete Beach, Florida, has been welcoming travelers for nearly a century. While the property boasts a glamorous history, after over 90 years of service, it was time for a full-scale renovation that would prepare the hotel for another hundred years.

During the renovation, Parker-Torres Design, the architecture firm that led the project, was faced with a need to preserve the visual appeal of the hotel, prevent unnecessary demolition to the building, and provide reliable ADA-compliant, second-story access to a new poolside bar.

"Creating a new accessible and usable space for all within a building that was built in 1928 is a challenge in itself, said Heather Gray, Senior Designer at Parker-Torres. "We used [an Ascension] lift next to the new lit staircase.

The Ascension Clarity wheelchair lift used in the Don CeSar is designed to provide second-story access while maintaining a low profile. The lift features a small footprint and glass enclosure, as well as quiet operation.

Additionally, Parker-Torres Design chose a custom color so the lift would match the finish of the hotel bar and blend into the atmosphere. "The sleek design allows for a visually pleasing look that provides ADA compatibility so that all guests have access," said Joseph Zimmerman, Don CeSar's Director of Engineering.

Moreover, the Ascension Clarity sits flush on the ground without needing a ramp or added demolition and construction of a lift pit. This feature allows for lower installation costs and maintains the integrity of historic buildings.

The Clarity was also perfectly suited to withstand the constant exposure it would have to the humidity and salt sea spray common to its Florida locale. Ascension's outdoor use package includes a zinc-rich primer on



Courtesy of Ascension Lifts

exposed steel for added corrosion protection and an additional foam seal on the platform to prevent any moisture intrusion.

Florida's historic Pink Palace has reopened to delight and amaze its patrons anew with modern amenities and world-class experiences. The new wheelchair lift enables guests of all abilities to enjoy the stunning Gulf of Mexico sunsets from the rooftop of the Don CeSar hotel for the next 93 years.

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HKS Makes Equity and Safety Paramount in New Bathroom Designs

The firm’s research is supporting a new model for flexible, inclusive student housing bathroom design. See where they studied it and how they plan to put it into practice.

By Dr. Renae Mantooth and Zac Rudd

The education sector has been contending with questions about bathroom safety and comfort as it relates to gender identity and expression. These are longstanding concerns for the design of bathroom spaces, from PreK through Higher Ed. In the context of college and university student housing, hectic and crowded communal bathrooms are often considered an unpleasant rite of passage for first-year dorm residents.

Recent research into flexible and inclusive bathroom design demonstrates that these spaces can provide choice, privacy, hygiene and convenience

for all users. Bathrooms can be designed to offer physical safety along with psychological safety that supports inclusion and belonging – two vital aspects of students’ health and well-being.

DIGGING DEEP TO UNDERSTAND STUDENT NEEDS

A coalition between global design and consulting firm [HKS](#), the nonprofit [Center for Advanced Design Research and Evaluation](#) (CADRE), and the [University of California, Davis](#) undertook a comparative mixed methods

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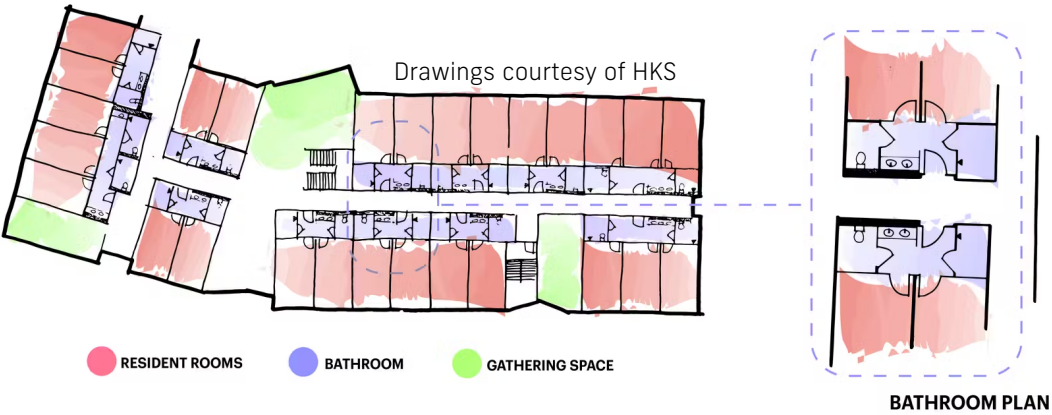
research study to learn how facility design can better meet the needs of institutions of higher learning and their students. The goal of the study was to understand how the design of student housing facilities (especially regarding different bathroom configurations) influences student health and well-being as well as building operations and maintenance.

Bathroom configurations in student housing can typically be organized into three categories: communal, cluster, and suite-style. In simple terms, communal bathrooms support high density and high occupancy; cluster bathrooms support high density and medium occupancy; and suite-style bathrooms support low density and low occupancy. Each of these models afford differing benefits, such as space efficiency, socialization, privacy or autonomy. These different configurations also have implications for how bathroom spaces are programmed and assigned, whether in a typical gender binary model (with separate bathrooms designated as male and female) or more inclusive models that serve any gender.

In our research, we sought out two conditions at UC Davis: one residence hall with a cluster style layout (shared bathrooms directly off the hallway) and the other comprising mini-suites (private bathrooms shared only with suitemates). In terms of space efficiency, the cluster style dedicates 23 square feet of bathroom space per bed, while the mini-suite style dedicates 25 square feet of bathroom space per bed. We wanted to understand how these different bathroom configurations influence the well-being of students regarding gender identity, as well as the operational concerns of the different typologies.



This is a cluster-style bathroom layout in a typical student housing wing.



This is a mini-suite bathroom layout.

In both conditions, the residence hall bathrooms and rooms are designed to flex in occupancy from year to year, based on the needs of the institution and student population. The physical spaces themselves don't change, but the gendered signage on the door or the occupancy and gendered assignments within the suite can change.

During the study, most of the cluster-style bathrooms were designated as gender inclusive, with some gender binary bathrooms dispersed throughout the residential floors. When conducting focus groups with students and residential advisors about the bathrooms' gender designations and how those designations related to students' usage behaviors, we found that most study participants used the bathroom closest to their room – prioritizing convenience and availability over the importance of spaces segregated by gender.

The more inclusive bathroom design model allows students to prioritize their personal needs for choice, privacy, hygiene and convenience over any perceived social dynamics. Student residents and resident advisors reported that due to this more inclusive model, they give and receive respect for privacy in the bathrooms.

Students told us that this respect contributed to making them feel less concerned about differences associated with their peers' identities, even in a setting such as a shared residence hall bathroom.

From the perspective of operations and maintenance staff, the inclusive model offers more flexibility day-to-day, for cleaning and repairs. In both settings, residents who expressed higher satisfaction with their environment tended to demonstrate better mental well-being, a stronger sense of belonging to their university and lower levels of loneliness.

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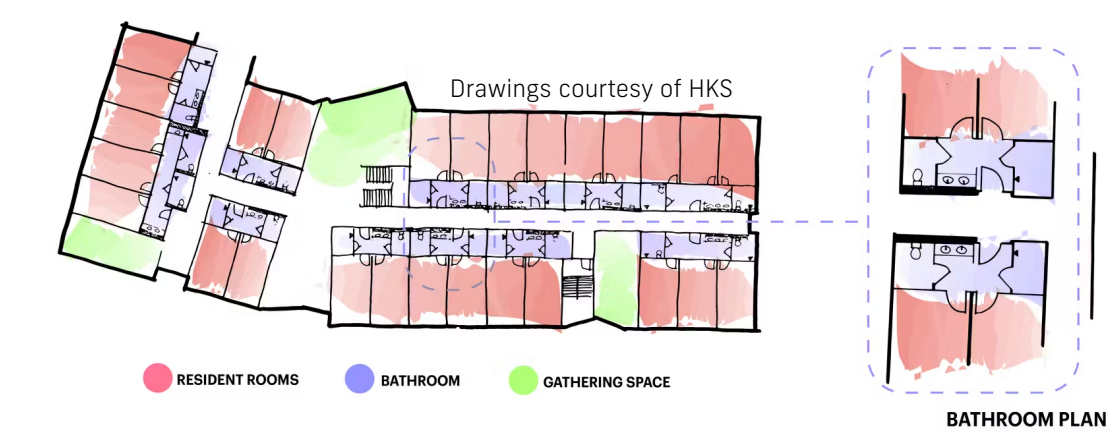
Good design ensures that the design of the physical space supports the needs and policies of facilities management and operations. Built-in flexibility is crucial in the context of student housing because occupancy is temporal in these spaces, with new residents from year to year or even semester to semester.

PUTTING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

In addition to our research efforts, HKS is designing a new student residence hall to house 600 students and resident assistants (RAs) at the University of Texas at San Antonio. During the discovery phase of the project, HKS designers and researchers engaged with approximately 50 current UTSA students to help understand their varying needs.

Based on student voices and our past research, HKS is employing inclusive design strategies in the UTSA student housing project, particularly regarding the shared bathrooms. These strategies include providing two entry and exit points in the design of the communal restrooms. This design prevents students from feeling trapped within a shared space and enables people to quickly exit if they perceive a threat to their safety. The additional egress point also provides convenient access to the bathroom from either side of the corridor where the residences are located. To maximize auditory and visual privacy, the design employs lockable floor-to-ceiling partitions in the toilet and shower stalls. This bathroom layout also gives students choice through scaled privacy – the option to use one shared space with stalls or the fully private bathroom that is directly adjacent to the shared space. And lastly, universal fixtures are specified to allow all users the access and comfort to use any restroom facility. Providing separate spaces with all necessary fixtures affords space assignment flexibility well into the future.

This is a cluster-style bathroom layout in a typical student housing wing.



The UTSA student housing bathroom plan.

THE POWER OF CHOICE

The built environment offers physical safety. From a roof over students' heads to protect from the elements, to elaborate security measures, design can explicitly provide physical barriers of control in the pursuit of safety. As designers and researchers, we know that our physical spaces are capable of much more. The design of space organizes our social systems, provides an experience unique to a place that delivers meaning, offers tools to make our everyday lives easier and can even help heal. Inclusive bathroom designs afford choice, hygiene and privacy, to provide comfort and ultimately support students' physical and psychological safety. These designs are also inherently flexible for occupancy changes over time.

Inclusive bathrooms are at the heart of inclusive environments. Breaking the gender binary model of bathroom design respects differences between users by prioritizing common needs, all while streamlining facility maintenance and operations.

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EXPRESS TLX SERIES

Bradley's Express [TLX Series 4-station lavatory system](#) offers an extended multi-user, open trough design. It is crafted from resilient Terreon Solid Surface, and can accommodate up to four users, all while being compact enough to conserve wall space effectively. The linear design reduces flat areas for standing water to collect. It also installs faster than traditional counters and sinks with fewer plumbing connections. ADA and TAS compliant and available in a variety of colors.

www.bradleycorp.com



WIFI-ENABLED,
ADA-COMPLIANT OPERATOR

With its slim profile, the 6300 Series Low Energy Operator, with WiFi, can fit into tight spaces while blending seamlessly with the door frame. Its modular design allows for one-person installation and single and double door applications. It also features the first known programming interface using any WiFi-enabled smart device, with no need to download an app. ADA-enabled, it allows doors to be operated through the use of push buttons, wave switches or hands-free radio frequency devices.

www.nortonrixson.com



ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT ADULT
CHANGING STATION

Koala Kare's KB3000-AHL Adjustable Height Changing Station is designed to be inclusive. Too often, it is a struggle for families and caregivers of adolescents and adults with special needs or disabilities to find an adequate means of changing in public. This changing table, which can handle a working load of up to 500 pounds, is designed to change that. It reduces the risk of injury for caregivers during changing and helps connect people with special needs and disabilities to the public locations that they want to visit.

www.koalabear.com



A-SERIES ILLUMINATED ROOM SIGNAGE

The sleek, ADA-compliant illuminated room sign offers complete customization including the choice of orientation, text alignment, and faceplate color. Specifically tailored for multifamily, hospitality, and healthcare applications including apartments, condominiums, student housing, senior living spaces, hotels, and patient rooms, the modular design features an integrated driver – versus remote – allowing for straightforward installation and simplified serviceability. The modularity of the signage allows the frame and electrical components to ship separately so that the frame and components can be installed first and the faceplate later, reducing on-site storage requirements while maintaining tight project deadlines.

www.dmflighting.com

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SLIDING DOOR SYSTEM**

The XtendSlide Telescoping Sliding Door System allows door leaves to overlap, maximizing opening width and minimizing the wall space needed for full operation. Ideal for classrooms, exam rooms and other low-traffic areas that may function as flexible spaces, the sliding doors provide large, accessible openings while eliminating swing arc trajectories. They also reduce the door's horizontal footprint to allow design flexibility.

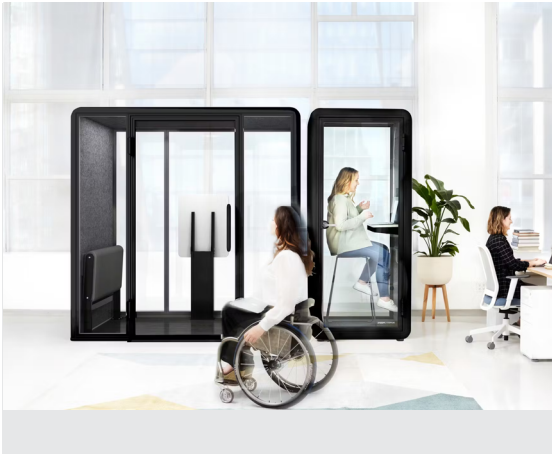
www.specadsystems.com



EAST LINEAR FAUCET

Available in more than 20 decorative finishes, the [Newport Brass](http://www.newportbrass.com) East Linear Kitchen Bridge Pull-Down Faucet features solid brass construction and ADA-compliant lever handles. Features quarter-turn washerless ceramic disc valve cartridges and a two-function, push-button control spray engine with solid brass housing and a magnetic docking system to secure the spray engine to the spout. Outlet spout height is 10.01 in., spout reach 8.52 in., 8-in. centers and 1.8 GPM max.

www.newportbrass.com

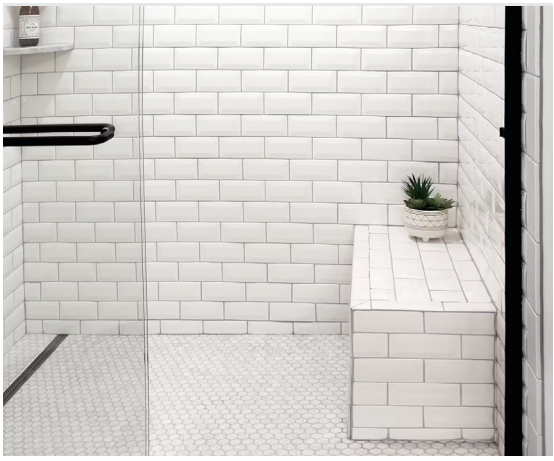


POPPINPOD

The PoppinPod Kolo is a flexible office phone booth that can fit up to six people. It offers a quiet space within open environments for focused work, one-on-one meetings and gatherings of up to six people. Features built-in power, comfortable ventilation, mobility and personalized lighting at the touch of a button, providing a turnkey solution for any space and user need.

Anti-Eavesdrop Design reduces speech intelligibility and dampens sound, preventing confidential conversations from being overheard. Available in five sizes, plus an ADA-compliant model that ensures privacy is accessible to all.

www.kimballinternational.com



BENCHSEAT

The BenchSeat by QuickDrain USA balances elegant style with universal design and accessibility, building upon QuickDrain's commitment to accessible, safe shower design. Accommodates the ADA standards for height and exceeds the ADA weight guidelines of 250 pounds. Available in three configurations: a rectangle bench and large or small corner bench options. Custom sizes are also available on request.

Each bench comes ready to assemble with no framing required, reducing the amount of lumber needed on-site. No mechanical fasteners or anchors are required for installation. Made with 100% recycled 2-inch rigid PET plastic foam panels; each BenchSeat installed uses up to 400 recycled water bottles.

www.quickdrain.com

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AGREE

The Agree tables from Steelcase are easy to reconfigure for any learning mode and foster connection and engagement in active learning spaces. Keystone and chevron table shapes form a soft arc with clear sightlines between students when arranged in lecture mode, while trapezoid tables can be combined and reconfigured for interesting zones and versatile layouts that support the flow of active learning. ADA-compliant, the large personal table (24 in. x 40 in.) is an accessible option for all learners. Legs can be equipped with hard nylon glides but can also come in soft felt glides or soft-locking casters. Legs are also available in low gloss black or platinum gray. Choose from a curated collection of Steelcase laminates with color-matched edge band and an optional side dock with storage hook and center dock available in sterling dark solid.

www.steelcase.com



CATCH CHAIR

The [Samuelson Furniture](http://www.samuelsonfurniture.com) design studio sought to reimagine how furniture can contribute to the accessibility of a space—revealing fresh, innovative designs that don't compromise on durability and comfort. CATCH by Samuelson was launched in tandem with Samuelson Furniture's first-ever senior living collection, Living by Samuelson—a unique furniture line handcrafted with upscale design elements that are aimed to enhance the lifestyle experiences of those in retirement communities. Many products in the collection are available with CATCH by Samuelson and are the result of extensive ergonomic research. The patented hardware system, along with the entire Living by Samuelson collection, is thoroughly tested and engineered to meet the needs of users.

www.samuelsonfurniture.com



HYBRID RANGE POD

People requiring special accommodations sometimes find they have limited choices for using meeting pods — especially without a wheelchair ramp. But the Silen Space Hybrid Range allows everyone the chance to easily and comfortably join the meeting. All Silen privacy pods are universally accessible to offer inclusivity, accessibility, and an equal opportunity for the sound of silence. For more information, [click here](http://www.silen.com).

www.silen.com

ADA-COMPLIANT COMPACT
EMERGENCY PHONE

Viking's standard ADA compliant emergency phones are now available in a compact chassis. When the button is pressed, the compact emergency phones automatically dial a pre-programmed emergency phone number or central station number. The phones will roll to the next number if there is a busy signal or no answer, and will continue to dial until the call is answered. Meet ADA standards for handsfree emergency communication in elevators, areas of refuge, or any place an emergency phone is needed. The ADA compliant phones provide a single push-button auto dialer, call indicator light, pre-recorded location announcement, and a tactile braille label.

www.vikingelectronics.com



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