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New Hermes
2200 Northmont Pkwy
Duluth, GA 30096

Phone Toll-Free:	1-800-843-7637
Fax Toll Free:	1-800-533-7637
Email:	govbiz@gravograph-newhermes.com

Article 1

FINE-TUNING YOUR ADA KNOWLEDGE

When the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law, responsibility for bringing America's educational and health care facilities into compliance landed squarely on the facility manager's shoulders. In an attempt to inform and remind you of the federal regulations your institutions must adhere to, we have summarized some of ADA's technical building structure requirements to serve as a quick reminder.

Signage

Permanent rooms and spaces must be designated by raised, grade 2 Brailled characters and by pictograms (if applicable). Brailled characters must be raised 1/32", in upper case sans serif or simple serif type.

Symbols must be raised between 5/8" and 2". Letters and numbers must have a width-to-height ratio between 3:5 and 1:1, and a stroke-width-to-height ratio between 1:5 and 1:10.

ADA signage must also meet specifications for finish and contrast. Sign characters and backgrounds must be eggshell, matte, or other non-glare finish. The characters and symbols must also contrast with their background. With regard to mounting location and height, signage must be installed on the wall adjacent to the latch side of the door. However, if there is no wall space on the latch side, signage must be mounted on the nearest adjacent wall. Signage must also be mounted so that people are able to come within 3" of the signage without being obstructed. Lastly, signage must be placed 60" above the finish floor to the centerline of the sign.

Sinks

Sinks must be mounted with the counter or rim no higher than 34" above the finish floor. Knee clearance underneath the sink must be at least 27" high, 30" wide, and 19" deep. Furthermore, sinks cannot be deeper than 6-1/2" in depth. A clear floor space of at least 30" by 48" has to be provided in front of a sink to allow disabled persons accessibility from the front.

Hot water and drain pipes exposed underneath sinks are required to be insulated so as to prevent contact and sharp and abrasive areas must be eliminated.

Handrails & Grab Bars

The diameter or width of the gripping surfaces of all handrails and grab bars must be 1-1/4" to 1-1/2" or the shape must provide an equivalent gripping surface. If handrails or grab bars are mounted adjacent to a wall, the space between them must be 1-1/2". Handrails can be recessed if the recess is a maximum of 3" deep, extends at least 18" above the top of the rail, and is secured within its fitting so that it will not rotate. Finally, a handrail or a grab bar and any wall or other adjacent surface must not have any sharp or abrasive elements.

Ground & Floor Surfaces

Ground and floor surfaces along accessible routes and in accessible rooms and spaces including floors, walks, ramps, stairs, and curb ramps have to be stable, firm, and slip-resistant. Vertical changes in level are permitted up to 1/4" and do not require edge treatment. Changes in surface level between 1/4" and 1/2" need to be beveled with a slope no greater than 1/2". When changes in surface level are greater than 1/2" a ramp must be installed.

Carpeting and/or carpeting tile must be securely attached to the ground or floor surface and have a firm cushion, pad or backing. If no padding is used, the carpeting must have a level loop, textured loop, level cut pile, or level cut/uncut pile texture and have a maximum pile thickness of 1/2". In addition, exposed edges of the carpet should be fastened to the floor surface and have trim along the entire length of the exposed edge. If gratings are located in walking surfaces they cannot have spaces greater than 1/2" in one direction. Furthermore, if gratings have elongated openings, they need to be placed so that the long dimension is perpendicular to the dominant direction of travel.

Parking Spaces

Accessible parking spaces serving a particular building should be located on the shortest route of travel to an accessible entrance. When parking facilities do not serve a particular building, accessible parking must be located on the shortest route of travel to an accessible pedestrian entrance. The parking spaces are required to be clearly marked and at least 96" wide while parking access aisles have to be part of an

accessible route to the building entrance (parked vehicle overhangs cannot reduce the clear width of an accessible route). Two accessible parking spaces can share a common access aisle, however, both parking spaces and access aisles are required to be level with surface slopes not exceeding 1:50 (2%). Accessible parking spaces must also provide a minimum vertical clearance of 98" at the site and to at least one entrance and exit.

Stairs

If stairs are the only means of reaching a floor and the installation of either a ramp, platform lift or an elevator is not possible, then those stairs must adhere to Title III rules. Even if they are not the only means, stairs must have uniform riser heights and tread widths. Stair treads cannot be less than 11" wide and open risers are not permitted because they pose a safety risk. In addition, the undersides of nosings should not be abrupt. The radius of curvature at the leading edge of the tread cannot be greater than 1/2" and risers need to be sloped or the underside of the nosing must have an angle not less than 60 degrees from the horizontal. When stairs are located outdoors the approaches have to be designed so that water will not accumulate on walking surfaces. Lastly, nosings cannot project more than 1/2" and handrails must be installed on both sides.

Entrances

At least one public entrance must be made accessible and display the International Symbol of Accessibility. (Note: medical care facilities must provide a canopy or roof overhang.) Doors to this entrance must provide a minimum clear opening of 32", with specified maneuvering clearances to approach the open door.

Accessible door hardware that satisfies the "Closed-Fist" rule includes handles and levers, not doorknobs. Double doors or doors in a series must swing either in the same direction or away from the space between the doors, with at least 48" between the doors plus the width of any door swinging into the space. If an entrance has a revolving door, an accessible door must be provided at a specified minimum distance and all security/communication systems must be ADA compliant.

Parts of this article were taken from Part III of the Department of Justice's Federal Register