

# Make Buildings and Spaces Accessible

You may be able to make buildings, spaces, and products accessible using simple or low-cost solutions. The best solutions will follow the rules of universal design. This means designing products and environments that can be used by all people, as much as possible, without having to be modified.

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## Making Your Space Accessible

When assessing your premises for physical accessibility, there are a number of things to consider in developing your action plan:

- Do you own or lease your premises? This may affect how, when and at what cost accessibility changes can be made.
- Can your building accommodate physical changes?
- Can any necessary renovation work be done under normal maintenance activities, or regular update work?
- Do you need to hire an architect or engineer, or can a contractor do the job?
- What are your priorities based on your assessment?
- What are the simpler, immediate, lower-cost things you can do to improve accessibility?
- Remember to make your premises accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities, including physical, sensory, learning, developmental and mental health. This means paying attention to more than just ramps and accessible washrooms.

It also means:

- lighting
- audible alarm systems
- signage with high contrast lettering
- easy-to-find directories
- accessible parking

**The following checklist items will help you develop a plan to make your premises accessible:**

## Entrances

- entrances are accessible to persons using wheelchairs or scooters.
- canopies or other sheltering devices have adequate headroom.
- revolving door openings move slowly and safely to accommodate people using mobility aids.
- if there is no accessible revolving door, an adjacent accessible door opens automatically, has power assisted door operators or can be easily opened with one hand.
- mats are level with the floor and door thresholds are bevelled so they do not create a tripping hazard
- people can easily find information, a reception counter, an accessible call bell or information phone for persons requiring assistance.

## Elevators

- elevator doorways are wide enough and stay open long enough to allow persons using wheelchairs to pass through easily.
- in accessible elevators, Braille signage and controls can be easily reached and a two-way emergency call system or telephone provided.
- audible signals announce floors and up/down direction of elevator cars.

## Exteriors

- accessible pedestrian route(s) or path(s) are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, scooters, or other mobility devices.
- curb cuts or ramps are wide enough for wheelchairs and scooters, have a non-slip finish and are kept clear of snow and ice in winter weather.
- routes are not obstructed by poles, plants, bicycle racks, etc..
- accessible entrances are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility.
- building and route signage is provided in large, high contrast lettering.
- accessible passenger loading zone accommodates taxis, buses, or accessible vehicles.
- awnings or canopies extending over exterior walkways have clear headroom.
- on exterior steps, forward edges are highly colour contrasted for easy visibility
- on both sides of ramps or exterior stairs, continuous handrails are a bright contrasting colour and have horizontal or vertical rails to prevent people from slipping through.

## Fire and Life Safety

- a fire policy and fire safety plan are in place for the evacuation of people with disabilities.
- main exit routes and exit doors are easily accessed and used by people using mobility aids.
- exit instructions are printed in large text, and mounted in an accessible, highly visible location
- fire alarms have both visual and audible signals.

## General Layout and Services

- queuing areas and serving aisles are wide enough for people using mobility aids including electric wheelchairs and scooters.
- cashier desks, service counters or counters/tables in eating areas are accessible to and useable by patrons using wheelchairs or scooters.
- public telephones, coat racks or display shelves are accessible to and useable by patrons with various disabilities e.g. wheelchair users, persons with low vision or hearing loss.
- appropriate lighting is installed to ensure that people with vision disabilities may clearly identify colours, patterns and signage.

## Interiors

- floor finishes have non-slip surfaces under wet and dry conditions.
- open-concept, accessible routes are marked by bright colour or textural changes at floor level, to provide directional cues for people with vision disabilities.
- there are no protruding objects or tripping hazards in accessible routes, and if so, they are clearly marked with a bright colour, a cane-detectable floor finish, or a guard.
- where floors are carpeted, the carpet is of firm, dense construction and easy for a wheelchair user to roll over without difficulty.
- thresholds are bevelled to accommodate different floor materials.

## **Parking Areas**

- accessible parking spaces are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility.
- in accessible underground parking areas, a call bell or two-way communication system is located near parking spaces reserved for persons who may require assistance.
- there is a safe, clearly marked, accessible pedestrian route from the designated parking area to an accessible building entrance or elevator lobby.
- accessible pedestrian route is made of firm, level material.

## **Public Washrooms**

- an accessible stall is provided for each sex when integrated into regular washrooms or an accessible stand-alone unisex washroom is located nearby.
- the following washroom features are accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities:
  - grab bars.
  - coat hooks.
  - flush controls.
  - wash basins.
  - toilet paper dispenser.
  - call button for emergencies.
  - mounted automatic hand-dryers or paper towel holders.
  - lever-handled faucets or automatic faucet.

## **Signage and Information Systems**

- show the International Symbol of Accessibility.
- display universal hearing disability symbols where equipment is available, e.g. TTY.
- include Braille information.
- include appropriate pictograms, wherever possible (e.g. on washroomdoors.)
- include large high contrast text, clear, light-coloured lettering or symbols on a dark background, or dark characters on a light background.
- are mounted at a convenient height for both wheelchair users and people with vision disabilities.

## **Wall Finishes**

- walls in busy areas, corridors, ramps or staircases are finished in smooth, non-glossy, non-abrasive finishes.
- colour of doors or door frames in hallways contrast with surrounding wall colours.
- fire exit doors are consistently coloured throughout the building, so that they are easily distinguishable from other doors.
- fire hose cabinets and fire extinguishers are in a highly contrasting colour.
- wall mirrors are limited in size, to prevent visual confusion.
- mirrors that cover a wall (e.g. in a restaurant) are clearly marked for people with low vision.