

ADA Accessibility Guidelines and You

The ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) are now under review for updating. These guidelines are requirements for new construction and alterations of buildings and facilities.

We don't know when we'll be seeing the final decisions. While we wait to see what will be new, here are a few things that are in the current ADAAG Manual developed by the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Compliance Board (Access Board) in July 1998 that relate to deaf and hard of hearing persons:

Elevators

4.10.4 - **Hall Lanterns.** Audible signals sound once for the up direction, twice for down. Visual signals provide this information to people who are deaf and hard of hearing. At least one visible signal must serve each car. A separate fixture for each direction is not required.

4.10.14 - **Emergency Communications.** Emergency two-way communication devices in order to accommodate people with hearing or speech impairments, ADAAG specifies that the system not rely solely on voice communication. An audio system with a visual display can provide information on the status of a rescue. Clearly labeled visual displays can be as simple as lighted jewels that indicate the call for help has been activated and that this message has been received.

Alarms

4.1.2(14) - **Scoping.** ADAAG requires both audible and visual alarms in facilities that have emergency warning systems whether building-wide systems or self-contained systems are provided...ADAAG does not require an emergency system but requires compliance where one is provided. In alterations, this requirement applies where a new alarm system is installed or existing system is replaced or upgraded.

4.28.3 - **Visual Alarms.** In general, it is not sufficient to install visual signals only at audible alarm locations. Audible alarms installed in corridors and lobbies can be heard in adjacent rooms but a visual signal can be observed only within the space it occupies. Visual alarms are required in hallways, lobbies, restrooms and other general usage and common use areas, such as meeting and conference rooms, classrooms, cafeterias, employee break rooms, dressing rooms, examination rooms and similar spaces. Visual alarms are not required in areas used solely as employee work areas or in mechanical, electrical, or telephone closets, janitor's closets, or similar non-occupied spaces.

Symbols of Accessibility 4.30.7

This section includes three symbols specifically for deaf and hard of hearing persons:

- One to identify the location of text telephones (TTYs), including on directional signs required at banks of telephones without TTYs.
- One used to identify phones equipped with volume controls.
- One used to indicate the availability of assistive listening systems in assembly areas, which can also be used to provide notice of other auxiliary aids and services such as realtime captioning, sign language/oral interpreting services.

Telephones

4.13.5 - **Hearing Aid Compatible and Volume Control Telephones** - The ADAAG requires that wheelchair accessible public phones, including pay and closed circuit phones, provide a volume control and be hearing aid compatible. In addition, 25% of all other public phones are required to have a volume control. Phones with volume control must be dispersed among all public-use phones, including closed circuit phones, throughout the facility.

Phones made in or imported into the U.S. are compatible with hearing aids as a result of the Hearing Aid Compatibility Act of 1988. A compatible phone generates a magnetic field that can be "translated" by hearing aids with a "T" switch, which activates a telecoil. This normally results in a clearer signal than having the hearing aid re-amplify the audio output of the handset. It is important that compatible phones be shielded or located away from other electromagnetic sources, which can interfere with T-switch transmission.

Volume controls on pay phones are located in either the base or the handset and are built into the telephone instrument as purchased or leased from a vendor. Most are located in the base and operated by pressing a button or key. Volume controls located in handsets are often used in retrofitting existing phones. Telephones required to have a volume control must be identified by a sign containing a depiction of the telephone handset with radiating sound waves.

4.31.9 - Text Telephones (or TTYs). This section runs approximately 3 pages, with subsections on using TTYs, recognizing a TTY call, how TTYs work (transmission codes), Public pay phones, permanently fixed vs. portable TTYs, TTY scoping, location and signage, alterations, shelf and outlet, TTY access at wheelchair accessible phones, and selecting a TTY.

The ADAAG primarily covers only fixed building elements, so it addresses TTY access only at public pay phones. However, other requirements in the ADA require communication access. For example, the Department of Justice Title III regulation requires public accommodations to provide TTYs on request, when customers, clients, patients, or participants are permitted to make outgoing calls on more than an incidental convenience basis.

Section 4.1.3.(17) requires at least one TTY on site where there are four or more pay phones (and at least one is interior) and in specific buildings or locations when a pay phone is provided.

In general, ADAAG requires a text telephone where four or more pay phones are added or altered. This includes replacement of existing pay phones with units of different types, relocating existing pay phones, or installing new pay phones where none had previously been located.

Assembly Areas

4.33 includes five pages on Assistive Listening Systems (ALS). Topics covered are: how ALSs operate, types of systems, minimum requirement, public access system and microphones, receivers and couplers, signage, maintenance, audio induction loop, infrared systems, FM systems, hardwired systems, and two charts.

In assembly areas where audible communication is integral to the use of the space (movie theaters, concert halls, lecture halls, playhouses, meeting rooms) there are requirements for permanently installed ALSs when there is fixed seating and may be an audio amplification system. In other assembly areas, such as those without fixed seating, a permanently installed system or electrical outlet and supplementary wiring for a portable system.

There is also a requirement that there must be receivers to serve at least 4% of the total number of seats, but no less than two receivers, and signs must be provided to notify patrons of the ALS availability.

Accessible Travel and Lodging

9.2.2(8) - Accommodations for Persons with Hearing Impairments. Accessible rooms or suites must also provide accommodations for people with hearing impairments (visual alarms and notification devices, volume controls on permanently installed telephones, etc.). This is required in order to accommodate a person (or couple or family) who needs both types of access. Additional portions of rooms or suites are required to provide accommodations only for persons with hearing impairments.

9.3 Visual Alarms, Notification Devices and Telephones, Auxiliary Alarms. A portion of sleeping units in transient lodging facilities must have a visual alarm connected to the building alarm system or have an outlet for a portable device. Portable devices must be capable of being triggered by the building emergency alarm system....Portable units have to be activated by a signal from the central alarm control system, transmitted to a receiver plugged into an electrical outlet.

Care must be taken that notification devices intended to signal a door knock or bell are separately wired. Like auxiliary alarms, these devices can be portable and made available as needed. In this case, ADAAG requires appropriate outlets and wiring.

Permanently installed telephones must be equipped with a volume control. An accessible electrical outlet within 4 feet of a phone connection is required to facilitate the use of a portable text telephone (or TTY). (Facility operators are responsible for making portable TTYs available under ADA requirements that call for the provision of "auxiliary aids").

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