

Design of Public Spaces Standard

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Design of Public Spaces Standard

In this module you will learn about the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standard.

The standard sets requirements for specific features of our physical environment that will make it easier for people with disabilities to move through, use and enjoy what our communities have to offer. Watch this video for an introduction to the standard.

Video Transcript

Space for Everyone: Introduction to the Design of Public Spaces Standard – Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

Narrator:

Public spaces connect us to where we want to go. When we leave home we depend on them to take us to everything our communities have to offer.

Accessible public spaces provide the important link between places to work, travel, shop and play.

Removing barriers on recreational trails, outdoor play spaces, parking, along sidewalks, and at pedestrian crossing areas will make public spaces easier to navigate, allowing people with disabilities to get to where they want to go and giving them the chance to enjoy our outdoor spaces.

Within the next 20 years, as the population ages, the number of people with disabilities will increase from 1 in 7 to 1 in 5.

This means increased demand for accessible public spaces that support independence and mobility, for example, increased availability of accessible parking that can provide better access to shopping and services.

Ontario is making public spaces accessible through the Design of Public Spaces Standard.

The Design of Public Spaces Standard builds on accessibility design practices we already see emerging in our communities when new public spaces are built, and when major changes are made to older spaces.

Though change takes time, considering the needs of people with disabilities from the earliest stages when designing, planning and constructing public spaces will result in more accessible and liveable communities for all Ontarians.

Providing the same opportunities for people with disabilities as everyone else allows for people to fully participate in the life of our communities by allowing them to be active and independent.

Increasing access to places where people can shop, work and play is an investment in our province's future.

Through these improvements, we really are making Ontario open to everyone.

The Design of Public Spaces Standard, as outlined in this module, sets requirements for specific features of our physical environment that will make it easier for people with disabilities to move through, use and enjoy what our communities have to offer.

[Text on screen:] Developed by Curriculum Services Canada with support from the Government of Ontario Copyright 2013

Now let's take a closer look at the requirements of this standard.

Module Topics

- About the Design of Public Spaces Standard
- How the Standard Relates to Other Requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)
- Who Must Comply?
- Compliance Timelines for the Design of Public Spaces Standard
- Recreational Trails and Beach Access Routes
 - Requirements for Recreational Trails and Beach Access Routes
- Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas
- Outdoor Play Spaces
- Exterior Paths of Travel
- Accessible Parking
 - Requirements for Accessible Off-Street Parking
 - Requirements for Accessible On-Street Parking
- Obtaining Services
- Maintenance Planning

This module will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete.

About the Design of Public Spaces Standard

Accessible public spaces make it easier for people with disabilities to move through and use the environment.

The requirements of the standard are divided into seven sections:

- Recreational trails and beach access routes
- Outdoor public use eating areas, like those found at rest stops or picnic grounds
- Outdoor play spaces
- Exterior paths of travel (sidewalks or walkways) and their associated elements, such as ramps, stairs, curb ramps, rest areas and accessible pedestrian signals
- Accessible off-street and on-street parking spaces
- Obtaining services (service counters, fixed queuing guides and waiting areas)
- Maintenance planning

The scope of the requirements

The standard requires organizations to incorporate accessibility when:

- Building new public spaces, or
- Making planned significant alterations to existing public spaces.

Organizations are **not** required to retrofit public spaces to meet the requirements. This means that organizations are not required to alter their public spaces if they have no plans to do so.

Accessibility for elements related to buildings, for example, building entrances, washrooms and barrier-free paths of travel, are **not** addressed in this standard. They are addressed through Ontario's Building Code.

How the Standard Relates to Other Requirements of the IASR

It's important to remember that the General Requirements section of the regulation includes requirements that may be relevant to the Design of Public Spaces Standard. For example:

- All organizations with accessibility plan requirements must make sure that their multi-year accessibility plan outlines how their requirements under the regulation (including the Design of Public Spaces Standard) will be met.
- Designated public sector organizations are required, except where not practicable to do so, to “incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities,” which may be relevant to the accessibility features of public spaces such as outdoor play spaces or outdoor public use eating areas.

Who Must Comply?

The standard applies to public, private and not-for-profit organizations in Ontario.

Small organizations, which are private and not-for-profit organizations with 1 to 49 employees, are exempt from certain requirements which are identified throughout this module.

Who must comply - owner or lease-holder?

The standard states that the organization that must comply with the requirements is the one that has authority or approval to **build on or make planned significant alterations to the public space**, but not necessarily an organization that may have approved the construction or otherwise have an interest in the property.

This may not necessarily be the owner of the land, but could be the lease-holder or operator. Below are some examples:

Examples

- A municipality may decide to build a public parking garage on land that it owns and a private construction company carries out this work on its behalf. The organization responsible for compliance with the requirements for accessible parking would be the municipality.
- An organization may lease an unused parcel of land to another organization that then decides to build and maintain a recreational trail on it. The organization responsible for compliance with the requirements for trails on the land would be the lease-holder and not the land owner.

Compliance Timelines for the Design of Public Spaces Standard

Your organization must meet all its requirements starting on a certain date, based on its type and size.

The requirements apply when building new or making planned significant alterations to existing public spaces on and after the dates set out below. This allows organizations to include accessibility right at the beginning, in the earliest stages of planning and design.

When do you need to comply?

Below are the compliance timelines for when organizations must start meeting the requirements of the standard:

Government of Ontario and Legislative Assembly

January 1, 2015

Government of Ontario and Legislative Assembly must comply starting January 1, 2015

Large and small designated public sector organizations

January 1, 2016

Large and small designated public sector organizations must comply starting January 1, 2016

Large organizations (50 or more employees)

January 1, 2017

Large organizations with 50 or more employees must comply starting January 1, 2017

Small organizations (1 to 49 employees)

January 1, 2018

Small organizations with 1 to 49 employees must comply starting January 1, 2018, but only with those requirements relating to:

- Recreational trails and beach access routes
- Accessible off-street parking
- Obtaining services

For a description of how organizations are classified under the regulation, please refer to the Organizational Classification Chart.

Existing Contracts

If an organization has entered into a contract on or before December 31, 2012 to build a new or make planned significant alterations to an existing public space, and the contract does not meet the requirements of the standard, the requirements do not have to be met in honouring the contract. Despite this exemption, organizations are encouraged to meet the requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standard wherever possible.

Recreational Trails and Beach Access Routes

Accessible recreational trails and beach access routes allow everyone to enjoy the natural spaces in our communities, including people with disabilities.

Below is information about what this requirement applies to:

What are recreational trails?

Recreational trails are public pedestrian trails intended for recreational and leisure purposes, such as walking through a park or enjoying nature.

It does not include wilderness trails, back country trails and portage routes, or trails only meant for cross-country skiing, mountain biking, or driving motorized recreational vehicles, such as snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles.

What are beach access routes?

Beach access routes help people get to a public beach area. They are often constructed pathways, allowing people to access a beach from a parking lot, trail, or picnic area.

They include both permanent and temporary routes (e.g. routes which may be removed for the winter months).

Requirements for Recreational Trails and Beach Access Routes

The requirements for recreational trails and beach access routes apply to **all** organizations.

Consultation requirements for recreational trails

Consulting with people with disabilities can help identify and prevent accessibility barriers that may not be easily recognizable, and allows organizations to better meet the needs of their community.

When building new recreational trails, or making planned significant alterations to existing ones, organizations must consult with the public and people with disabilities to help determine particular trail features that affect the intended experience of the trail.

Municipalities must also consult with their accessibility advisory committee, if one has been established.

Features you must consult on include:

- The trail's slope
- The need for and location of ramps on the trail, and
- The need for, location of, and design of rest areas, passing areas, viewing areas, amenities and other features on the trail

Organizations and municipalities do not need to consult about beach access routes.

Technical requirements for recreational trails and beach access routes

When building new or making planned significant alterations to existing recreational trails and beach access routes, your organization must follow certain technical requirements, including:

- Minimum width and height clearance measurements
- Surface characteristics

If your organization plans to add a boardwalk or ramp to a trail or beach access route, similar technical requirements apply.

In addition, the following requirements apply to recreational trails:

- Trail heads must have signage containing information about the physical characteristics of the trail, including length of the trail, average and minimum trail

width and, location of amenities to help users decide how best to enjoy the trail experience.

- When other media is used to provide information about the recreational trail (beyond advertising, notice or promotion), such as a park website or brochure, it must contain the same information as the trail head signage.

Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas

Outdoor public use eating areas are public areas with tables and intended for use by the public as a place to consume food, such as picnic tables in parks, on hospital grounds or university campuses, and outdoor food courts at amusement parks.

The requirements apply to all organizations **except small organizations**.

When building new or making planned significant alterations to existing outdoor public eating areas, organizations must make sure:

- At least 20 per cent of **new** tables added, and no fewer than one of the new tables, are accessible to people using mobility aids, such as wheelchairs,
- The ground surface leading to and under the accessible tables is level, firm, and stable to accommodate mobility aids, and
- Enough clear space around the accessible tables is provided so people using a mobility aid can approach the tables.

How many accessible tables do you need?

The 20 per cent requirement applies to the purchase of **new** tables added to a public use eating area.

For example, a town decides to purchase five new tables to add to the five it already has in the park. To comply with the law, one of the five **new** tables must be accessible (20 per cent of five is one).

Outdoor Play Spaces

Accessible outdoor play spaces can provide play opportunities for all children and their caregivers regardless of their abilities.

The requirements apply to outdoor play spaces containing:

- Play equipment, such as swings, and/or
- Play features such as logs, rocks, sand or water

All organizations **except small organizations** must meet the following requirements when building new or making planned significant alterations to existing outdoor play spaces.

Consultation requirements

To help organizations identify the needs of all users of outdoor play spaces in the local community:

- Organizations must consult with the public and people with disabilities.
- Municipalities must also consult with their municipal accessibility advisory committee, where one has been established.

Accessibility in design requirements

The requirements also specify that organizations must:

- Incorporate accessible play space features for children and their caregivers with various disabilities, such as sensory components that promote active play experiences. For example, sensory play experiences can include sand or water play, or a sound or music panel.
- Make sure there is enough room for children and their caregivers with various disabilities to move through, in and around the play space, and
- Make sure the ground surface is firm, stable and able to absorb the shock of a fall to help prevent injuries.

Exterior Paths of Travel

Exterior paths of travel are sidewalks and walkways that help us get to our intended destination, that's why accessibility considerations are important.

The standard includes certain technical requirements when organizations **except small organizations** build new or make planned significant alterations to existing exterior paths of travel.

The standard does **not** apply to paths of travel that are regulated by Ontario's Building Code (e.g., a path of travel from a parking lot with accessible parking spaces to an accessible building entrance).

Here are some examples of the technical requirements for exterior paths of travel:

Sidewalks or walkways

Requirements for minimum width to support the passage of mobility aids, minimum height clearance to remove barriers for people with vision loss, and maximum steepness of slopes

Ramps

Requirements for minimum width, maximum steepness of slopes, size of landings, and handrails

Stairs that connect to an exterior path of travel

Requirements for step size, high tonal contrast markings for edge of steps, and tactile walking surface indicators at the top of each flight to indicate change of level for people with vision loss

Pedestrian curb ramps (or curb cuts)

Requirements to align with direction of travel, minimum width and maximum steepness of slope for people with mobility aids, and tactile walking surface indicators at the bottom of curb ramps to warn people with vision loss that they are approaching a roadway

Accessible pedestrian signals

Requirements identify essential features for people with vision loss and those who are deaf-blind, such as a locator tone for a signal box that is distinct from a walk indicator tone, tactile arrows that align with direction of crossing, and both audible and vibro-tactile walk indicators

Rest areas

Requirements to consult with the public and people with disabilities on the placement and design of rest areas when building new or making planned significant alterations to an existing sidewalk or walkway; municipalities must also consult with their accessibility advisory committee, if one has been established

Accessible Parking

This section of the standard includes requirements for both public off-street and on-street accessible parking spaces when building new or making planned significant alterations to existing parking spaces.

Below is information about what this requirement applies to:

What is off-street parking?

Off-street parking includes open and covered lots for short term parking by the public, such as a hair salon's customer parking lot or an underground parking garage at a shopping centre.

People may or may not need to pay to use off-street parking facilities.

What is on-street parking?

On-street parking can be located on a public highway, street, avenue, parkway, bridge or similar type of road.

Public sector organizations, such as municipalities, hospitals, universities and colleges, may own and maintain on-street parking spaces. On-street parking may provide direct access to shops, offices and other facilities.

People may or may not need to pay to use on-street parking.

Requirements for accessible off-street parking

Requirements for accessible off-street parking apply to **all** organizations.

When building new or making planned significant alterations to existing off-street parking facilities, certain technical requirements must be followed. For example:

- Off-street parking facilities must include two types of accessible parking spaces when two or more accessible spaces are required:
 - a wider space with signage that identifies the space as “van accessible”, and
 - a standard-width space
- Off-street parking facilities must include a minimum number of each type of accessible parking space, depending on the total number of parking spaces, as outlined in the standard. For example, where there are 1 to 12 parking spaces, the one accessible parking space required must be a wider space; where there are 13 to 100 parking spaces, four per cent must be accessible spaces, with generally equal numbers of wider spaces and standard spaces.
- Accessible parking spaces must have access aisles (a space between parking spaces) with a minimum width that provides people with disabilities the space to get in and out of their vehicles.
- Each accessible parking space must be identified with current signage requirements found in Regulation 581 (Accessible Parking for Persons with Disabilities) under the Highway Traffic Act.

Requirements for accessible on-street parking

Requirements for accessible on-street parking **apply only to certain designated public sector organizations**, like municipalities, school boards, hospitals, colleges, universities and public transportation organizations.

When building new or making planned significant alterations to existing on-street parking spaces, designated public sector organizations must consult with the public and people with disabilities on the following:

- Need for accessible on-street parking spaces
- Location of accessible on-street parking spaces, and
- Design of accessible on-street parking spaces

Municipalities must also consult with their accessibility advisory committee, if one has been established.

Note:

certain designated public sector organizations

For this section of the standard only (on-street parking requirements), “designated public sector organizations” refers to every municipality and those organizations listed in Schedule 1 of the IASR which includes hospitals, universities, colleges of applied arts and technology, district school boards, and organizations that provide public transportation. It does not include persons or organizations listed in Column 1 of Table 1 of Ontario Regulation 146/10 (Public Bodies and Commission Public Bodies – Definitions), of the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006.

Obtaining Services

The standard includes requirements for making service counters, fixed queuing guides and waiting areas accessible to people with disabilities. These elements can be located both inside and outside of buildings. It is important to note that these elements are not covered by Ontario's Building Code.

Requirements of this section apply to **all** organizations.

Service counters

When building new or replacing existing service counters, at least one service counter must be made accessible to people who use mobility aids, such as wheelchairs. You can make the counter accessible by making sure it:

- Is useable by someone sitting in a mobility aid, and
- Has enough clear space in front for a person using a mobility aid to approach the counter.

A queuing area is a place where people line up for services.

If your organization has one queuing line for several service counters, such as a coffee shop, each service counter must be accessible.

If your organization offers different types of service counters, each with its own queuing line, such as a large grocery store with regular, express and self-serve checkouts, you must make sure at least one of each type of service counter is accessible.

Where there are multiple queuing lines and service counters you must clearly identify all your accessible service counters with signage.

Fixed queuing guides

Fixed queuing guides are permanent or built-in fixtures that require people to line up and follow a set path. For example, an amusement park may use fixed queuing guides to help people line up at booths where they can purchase tickets for rides.

When installing new fixed queuing guides, you must make sure:

- The queuing area is wide enough for people using mobility aids, such as wheelchairs, and mobility assistive devices, such as canes, crutches and walkers, to move through the line, including when the line changes direction.
- People who are blind or have low vision can find the queuing guides with a cane.

Waiting areas

When building new or making planned significant alterations to your organization's existing waiting areas that have seating fixed to the floor, you must make sure that at least three per cent of the new seating space is accessible (but there must be at least one accessible seating space).

Accessible seating means a space in the waiting area where someone using a mobility aid, such as a wheelchair, can wait to receive service in the same area as other customers or patrons.

Maintenance Planning

All organizations (**except small organizations**) have a requirement under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation for multi-year accessibility plans.

Organizations must make sure that their multi-year accessibility plans include the following:

- Procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible parts of their public spaces, such as frequency of inspecting sidewalks for cracks
- Procedures for handling temporary disruptions when an accessible part of their public spaces is not useable, such as putting up a sign explaining the disruption and outlining an alternative (under the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, all organizations are required to let the public know when their facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use are temporarily unavailable)

It is important to note that this requirement comes into effect based on an organization's compliance timelines for the Design of Public Spaces Standard.

Knowledge Check

The requirements of the Design of Public Spaces Standard apply to an organization in which of the following circumstances?

Choose **all** that apply.

- A. When building new public spaces
- B. When making planned significant alterations to existing public spaces
- C. When undertaking regular maintenance activities designed to keep public spaces in good working order
- D. All of the above

Both A and B are correct. The requirements of the standard only apply when organizations build new public spaces or when they make planned significant alterations to existing public spaces.

Summary

You have now completed the Design of Public Spaces Standard module.

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