

# Beyond the ADA: How to incorporate Universal Design principles in commercial facilities

Questions and Answers provided by [Marcela Abadi Rhoads, AIA](#)

Q: How does one become a Registered Accessibility Specialist Nationally? [Natasha Suzansky]

A: You have to take the Accessibility Academy given by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation and take an exam (see website: <http://www.license.state.tx.us/ab/taa.htm>)

Q: ICC offers an Accessibility Specialist certification. Is this the same as Texas Registered Accessibility Specialist and is the test based on 2010 Federal ADA Guidelines? [David Akester]

A: It is different.

Q: Are sure that number shouldn't be 52 million at the end of the 20th century? There were 43 million Americans with disabilities by 1991 when the original ADA legislation became law. [John Roberts]

A: That is what I thought I said....at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century there were over 52 million persons with disabilities and per 2000 Census shows 48.9% with a disability.

Q: What is the difference between ADA and ANSI and is fair housing around or it became part of the ADA spec. [Ali Ajalli]

A: ANSI is part of the building code and ADA is a Civil rights law. There are technical differences, but now the 2010 ADA Standards is almost identical to the ANSI. Also ANSI doesn't have any scoping requirements only technical guidelines.

Q: Where are the rails for the ramp longer than 6' between landings? [John Ahern]

A: The requirements for landings and rails have to do with when you go 30" in rise. So it is not necessarily the length of the ramp but the height it goes. If the ramp is at 1:12 then each ramp run will be 30' long and will require a landing then. If handrails are not continuous then they need to extend 12" at the top and bottom.

Q: Does new ADAAG requirement for fitness rooms or similar spaces mandate clear space next to every exercise machine, or is it permissible to have a mixture of accessible and non-accessible machines of each type? [James Maurer]

A: A clear space is required next to each type, not every piece of equipment.

Q: Not sure I understand the use for Universal Design since It appears that all of the universal design elements are already required by ADA. [Steve Pults]

A: Some universal design principles are part of the ADA, but most principles go above and beyond. I was just showing examples of commercial facilities which are addressed in the ADA. The next two webinars will discuss residential facilities that are not covered by the ADA at all. The premise for this webinar was to show how the ADA is a starting point and how Universal design principles can take it a step further. My statements about the ADA being the law and Universal design being a philosophy and attitude regardless of ability is what I was trying to get across using buildings and building applications as an example.

Q: Is there any porous "pavement" for parking lots that meets universal design? [Ursula Twombly]

A: Grass could work as long as the slopes and level changes work. It will probably need to be maintained in order for the grass to keep from eroding. Also very small size crushed granite could work if well compacted

Q: Please define "fail safe". [Robert Pfauth]

A: According to Wikipedia: A **fail-safe** or **fail-secure** device is one that, in the event of failure, responds in a way that will cause no harm, or at least a minimum of harm, to other devices or danger to personnel. What I understood that to mean is that if an element was intended for a certain action, and the action changes, there won't be any harm. For example, the path of pavers that I showed with mulch on either side - is not a fail-safe path. If the person doesn't land on the pavers, the action fails and harm may occur.

Q: It appears that most of the examples you show are in "places of public accommodation" which would be governed by ADA. Thus, the bad examples are in fact violations of that standard. If compliance with ADA is required, how is this different from what you are describing as "universal design"? [Robert Pfauth]

A: I also showed many examples that went beyond the ADA. This webinar was about the ADA and Universal Design, so my examples were on how they work together. Universal Design principles are more encompassing and include more than persons with disabilities. My premise for this webinar was to show how the ADA is a starting point and how Universal design principles can take it a step further. I'm sorry if I didn't make my points in a way that showed that relationship.

Q: An example of an effective way to deal with 6C repetitive actions could be grocery stores which have "left" and "right" hand checkstands, so that the checkers can alternate between them from time to time, lessening repetitive stress injuries when scanning items. Some retail unions are beginning to include these features in their labor agreements. [Joel Niemi]

A: Great examples...thank you!

Q: If a building meets past ADA standards, must it be updated (by law) to meet new standards? [Jan Degenshein]

A: No. It is considered a "safe harbor."

Q: How do you approach a business/commercial facility that they are required to and should be complying with Title III? [Patricia Locurcio]

A: Hopefully you can speak to the Owner and they will listen. I'm not sure I follow the question though. Are you speaking of a patron or a designer approaching the owner?

Q: I still find many restrooms in restaurants that are not accessible. What are the laws regarding this? [William Phillips]

A: All public restrooms must be made accessible since 1991. Many establishments don't understand that.

Q: A curved ramp does not meet ANSI standards for cross slope. Is there an exception to this ANSI standard for curved ramps? [Jan Degenshein]

A: Cross slopes should still only be at 2% even if the outer walls are curved

Q: What was the name of the custom ADA product manufacturer of grab bars, etc.? [Stephen Long]

A: Great Grabz

Q: Who determines where grab bars are positioned in an accessible bathroom on home and commercial applications? [Patricia Locurcio]

A: There are technical guidelines in the ADA Standards. Look at Section 609

Q: Does the IBC in Alterations level 1,2,3 require ADA review.? [Marc Brummel]

A: No since the IBC refers to ANSI not ADA. But ask your municipality to see if a review is required for

accessibility. In Texas we do.

Q: The REM Koolhaus ramp has no rails. How did he get away with that? [John Ahern]

A: It was not a true ramp. The slope was less than 5% and therefore only considered a sloped surface.

Q: Is there still a cost percentage that ADA work must be done in remodel work? [Marc Brummel]

A: There is no minimum amount of money required to comply, however if there is an alteration that requires that items along the path of travel be modified or upgraded, then the DOJ allows up to 20% of the construction cost to be used for ADA upgrades. The remainder of the upgrades can be done later.

Q: Bright places are also very good for folks who are deaf. [Cari Watrous]

A: So good to know.

Q: Other than the 48" height and the restroom width, are there any other significant changes to the ADA from 1991 to 2010? [Rebecca Ward]

A: Yes others, like now all openings bigger than ½" along the accessible route (not just grates) will not be allowed, curb ramps require a 36" landing at the top....there is a good side by side comparison that the Access Board came up with.

Q: Can you recommend manufacturer(s) that sell transfer stairs for an existing pool that needs to comply with the new standards? [Steven Dandrea]

A: Sorry, I'm not so up on the pool manufacturers and their products.

Q: What do you think about the chair lift requirements for existing pools? Many small businesses that have an existing pool and the government is making it mandatory to add a chairlift, which I find to be hazardous to many of the users of the pool such as small children. Do you not think that a chair lift requirement would not be universal design since it is exclusive to a handicapped person? [Cheryl Davani]

A: I agree with you. I really think it was overkill. I think they are more dangerous than helpful, but only time would tell.