

How Accessible is Your Parking Lot?

By Jon Baggett

If there's one thing I've learned from all my trips to Super Wal-Mart it's this: park and walk! No matter how many times I attempt to find that spot up front, I spend 5-10 minutes driving around with very little success. At my age and good health condition, it's easier for me to park further away – despite the fact that my car is usually surrounded by SUVs upon my return.

For many people with disabilities in our community, this is not an option. The presence of handicap stalls and passenger loading zones is essential - not to mention lawful - for easy accessibility to public facilities. This legal requirement was established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

The Right Space

If your building offers self-parking for employees or visitors, then you are required to provide handicap accessible parking spaces. The size of the lot (based on the number of total spaces) determines how many car and van-accessible spaces are necessary.

Minimum Number of Accessible Parking Spaces			
Lot Total	Standard Spaces	Van Spaces	Total Accessible
1-25	0	1	1
26-50	1	1	2
51-75	2	1	3
76-100	3	1	4
100-150	4	1	5
151-200	5	1	6
201-250	6	1	7

There are three exceptions to these requirements. First, outpatient medical units require 10% of the total spaces to be handicap accessible. Second, facilities specializing in treatment/services to the mobility impaired require 20% of the total spaces to be handicap accessible. Last, valet parking facilities need only to provide a passenger loading zone on an accessible route to the entrance of a facility.

When it comes to the location of accessible parking spaces, the easiest thing to remember is this: shortest accessible route of travel. For those spaces that adjoin your building, handicap stalls should be located to the closest accessible

Did You Know?

The ADA legislation guarantees equal access for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications. It was created to enable our society to benefit from the skills and talents of these individuals and ensure that those with certain disabilities are guaranteed special access to services.

entrance. If your building has multiple entrances, then spaces should be provided near each of them. If a parking facility does not serve your particular building, then accessible parking should be closest to an accessible pedestrian entrance.

Accessible parking spaces should be at least 96 inches wide and have at least a 60-inch-wide, 20-foot-long access aisle located adjacent to the designated parking space. The access aisle is just wide enough to permit a person using a wheelchair to enter or exit the car (two spaces may share the same access aisle). Signs with the international symbol of accessibility must be mounted on the ground in front of these spaces high enough so they can be seen while vehicles are parked in the spaces. If the accessible route for the individual is in front of one of these parking spaces, then wheelstops should be installed to keep vehicles from reducing the width below 36 inches.

For van-accessible spaces, the width should be at least 132 inches unless the adjacent aisle is 96 inches wide to accommodate a wheelchair lift. In addition, there are two other requirements for this vehicle type. First, the mounted sign must designate the space as "van-accessible." Second, a minimum height clearance of 98 inches must be provided at the van parking space, access aisle, and along the route to and from that space.

Compliance Makes Perfect

Businesses or privately owned facilities that provide goods or services to the public have a continuing ADA obligation to ensure proper access to its employees and visitors. A professional estimator can help you determine whether your parking area meets these ADA Standards for Accessible Design. So greet your customers and employees of all abilities with a well-maintained, accessible parking area. It's the best welcome mat you can have!

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