



CURRENT NEWS FROM THE UNITED STATES ACCESS BOARD

ACCESS CURRENTS

Volume 16 No.1

January/ February 2010

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Board Releases Draft Update of §508 Standards and §255 Guidelines

The Board is undertaking an update of its standards for electronic and information technology in the Federal sector covered by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. As part of this effort, it is also updating guidelines for telecommunications products subject to Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act. On March 17, the Board released for public comment a draft of the updated standards and guidelines. The draft features a new structure and format that integrates the 508 standards and 255 guidelines into a single document referred to as the "Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Standards and Guidelines." Requirements have been reorganized according to functionality instead of product type since many devices now feature an array of capabilities and applications. The released draft includes proposed revisions to various performance criteria and technical specifications that are designed to improve accessibility, add clarity to facilitate compliance, address market trends, and promote harmonization with other guidelines and standards.

Products and technologies covered by this rulemaking include telephones and cell phones and other telecommunication products, computer hardware and software, websites, media players, electronic documents, and PDAs, among others. Access is addressed for various disabilities, including those that are sensory, physical, or speech-related in nature. As part of this rulemaking, the Board proposes to supplement its ADA Accessibility Guidelines, which cover access to facilities, to broaden coverage to include certain types of interactive transaction machines such as point-of-sales machines and self-service kiosks.

The draft rule is based on recommendations from the Telecommunications and Electronic and Information Technology Advisory Committee. The Board organized this committee to review the original standards and guidelines and to seek consensus on how they should be updated. The Committee, whose 41 members included representatives from industry, disability groups, standard-setting bodies in the U.S. and abroad, and government agencies, submitted its report to the Board in April 2008. The Board prepared the released draft based on its review of the committee's report and included additional changes of its own.

Through this release, the Board seeks comment on both the substance and structure of the document. A notice published by the Board in the Federal Register outlines substantive revisions to the standards and guidelines and highlights issues or topics where additional information from the public is sought. In addition, the Board seeks information for its use in preparing an impact and cost assessment on the changes. Instructions for submitting comments, which are due by June 21, are included in the notice. The Board will use the input received on this draft to prepare a proposed rule that will provide another opportunity for comment

The Board will hold a public hearing on the draft rule in San Diego at the 25th Annual International Technology and Persons with Disabilities Conference organized by the California State University at Northridge (CSUN). The hearing will take place March 25 from 9:00 to 12:00 and will be open to the general public, including those who are not registered to attend the conference. In addition, on April 1, the Board will conduct a webinar on the rule to review and explain changes. The webinar will provide an opportunity for questions but will not serve as a

forum for submitting comments.

The draft rule and published notice are available on the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/508.htm. These documents are also posted on www.regulations.gov which allows visitors to view and submit public comments. For further information, contact Tim Creagan at creagan@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0016 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Public Hearing

March 25th 9:00 a€" 12:00
 CSUN Conference
 Manchester Grand Hyatt
 Elizabeth Ballroom
 One Market Place
 San Diego, CA

Webinar

AS508 Standards Refresh
 April 1st 2:30 - 4:00 (ET)
www.accessibilityonline.org

Online Training Available from the Board and DBTACs

The Board is conducting a series of monthly webinars initiated last December in cooperation with a national network of ADA centers known as Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs). The subjects of recent sessions included accessible toilet and bathing facilities and requirements for Federal facilities and Recovery Act projects contained in updated standards issued under the Architectural Barriers Act.

The next webinar, which will take place April 1, will review the Board's proposed update of guidelines and standards for information and communication technologies. Subsequent webinars in the series will cover accessible parking and passenger loading zones (May 6) and achieving access to public rights-of-way (June 3). All webinars are scheduled for 2:30 a€" 4:00 (ET). For more information, including registration instructions, visit www.accessibilityonline.org. General attendance is free, but there is a \$25 cost charged by the DBTACs for processing continuing education credits. Questions or comments should be directed to Peggy Greenwell, the Board's Training Coordinator, at training@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0017 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Other DBTAC Webinars and Audio Conferences

In addition to the Board's monthly series, the DBTACs regularly offer webinars, audio conferences, and other training opportunities covering an array of topics related to the ADA, such as employee accommodation, accessibility surveys, assistive technology, and accessible media and information. For more information on these and other events, visit the DBTAC's training website at www.adacourse.org or call (800) 9494-4232 (v/TTY).

Board Participates in Statewide Rights-of-Way Training in Illinois

The Board routinely provides training and guidance on accessible streets and sidewalks as work proceeds on new guidelines for public rights-of-way. Lead staff members in this effort, Scott Windley and Lois Thibault, train and meet with state and local transportation and public works departments on a regular basis to share information and best practices on achieving accessible pedestrian networks that can be followed until final guidelines are issued. In February, Windley and Thibault participated in a comprehensive training program for highway engineers in Illinois held at four different locations across the state over a week's time. Organized by the Illinois Attorney General's office with support from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the full-day sessions focused on accessible sidewalk design and requirements under both state law, specifically the Illinois Environmental Barriers Act, and Federal laws such as the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act. The program, which included

trainings in Orland Park, Champaign-Urbana, Springfield, and Collinsville, had a combined audience of over 900 attendees.

"It was very beneficial for all responsible agencies, both state and Federal, to work together on this program," noted Windley. "The success of this effort speaks to the Illinois Attorney General office's active outreach and enforcement program and its constructive partnerships with IDOT and the Illinois Division of FHWA." Joining Windley on the program were Assistant Attorneys General Vickie Simpson and Erin Ipjian from the Springfield and Chicago Disability Rights Bureaus, who outlined state requirements, which have been harmonized with those of the ADA, Kevin Burke III, P.E., IDOT's Local Policy and Technology Engineer who covered design practices specified in the state's roads and streets manual, and Traci Baker, a civil rights specialist for the Illinois Division of FHWA who reviewed ADA and Rehabilitation Act requirements. Windley reviewed scoping and technical requirements contained in draft guidelines previously released by the Board, including those addressing pedestrian access routes, street crossings, curb ramps and blended transitions, detectable warnings, accessible pedestrian signals, on-street parking, and street furniture. Board resources, including copies of the draft guidelines, a manual on alterations, and a sidewalk checklist, were distributed at the trainings.

For more information on Board resources and training on public rights-of-way, contact Scott Windley at row@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0025 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY), or visit the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/prowac/.

Board Chair Douglas Anderson Keynotes Israeli Conference

Access Board Chair Douglas Anderson traveled to Tel Aviv in December as a guest of Access Israel to serve as keynote speaker at the nonprofit organization's first national conference. In his remarks, Anderson described how accessibility has been established as a civil right in the U.S. under the ADA and other laws and how standards have been developed and building codes supplemented to comprehensively address access to the built environment. He also reviewed the Board's work developing accessibility guidelines and standards for facilities, outdoor environments, transportation, and information and communications technologies. Earlier last year, the Israeli government adopted a law that requires public buildings to be accessible. The Board regularly meets with representatives from other nations and international groups to share information on promoting accessibility. For more information, contact the Board at info@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0080 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Dennis Cannon, the Board's Transportation Accessibility Expert, Retires

Dennis Cannon, the Board's long-time expert on transportation accessibility, retired in January after 29 years of service. Cannon joined the Board in 1981 as its Transportation Accessibility Specialist and authored the Board's ADA Accessibility Guidelines for transportation vehicles and transportation facilities shortly after the ADA became law. He provided extensive training and technical assistance on these guidelines which serve as the basis for standards used by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to enforce the law. He was also active in the Board's development of guidelines for telecommunications products under the Telecommunications Act, standards for electronic and information technology covered by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, and new guidelines for public rights-of-way under the ADA. Cannon also oversaw research projects funded by the Board on transportation accessibility. Before joining the Board, Cannon headed a consulting firm he founded, Synergy Systems, that specialized in advising transit districts and DOT on transportation accessibility.

In Memoriam: Laurinda Lacey, Former Board Staff Member

Laurinda Lacey, a former staff member of the Access Board with 24 years of service, died February 16th from a brain tumor. Lacey began her career in the Federal government at the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare and joined the Access Board in 1980, several years after the Board was created. She served as the Board's Director of Administrative Services and also managed Board research contracts. She retired in 2004 after 32 years of dedicated government service. She was also active in a variety of organizations promoting equality for

people with vision impairments.

Access Currents is a free newsletter issued by the Access Board every other month by mail and e-mail. Send questions or comments to news@access-board.gov or call (800) 872-2253 ext. 0026 (voice) or (800) 993-2822 (TTY). Mailing address: 1331 F Street, N.W., Suite 1000; Washington, D.C. 20004-1111.
