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Volume 16 No.3

May/ June 2010

[Subscribe](#)

- [Board to Hold Forum on Access to Medical Diagnostic Equipment](#)
- [Justice Department Advances Update of ADA Regulations](#)
- [Board to Propose Updated ADA Guidelines for Buses and Vans](#)
- [Upcoming Board Webinars](#)
- [Public Provides Feedback on Draft ICT Rule at Board Hearing](#)
- [Bureau of Engraving and Printing Seeks Comment on Making Currency Accessible](#)

Board to Hold Forum on Access to Medical Diagnostic Equipment

On July 29 the Board will hold a public meeting on new accessibility standards to be developed for medical diagnostic equipment. The event will allow interested parties and members of the public to provide input on the approach to this rulemaking. The standards will cover access to examination tables and chairs, weight scales, radiological equipment, mammography equipment, and other types of medical diagnostic equipment. The health care bill signed into law in March, the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act," calls upon the Board to issue these standards in two years in consultation with the Food and Drug Administration.

The purpose of the meeting is to gather information from stakeholders, including consumers, equipment manufacturers, the health care industry, government agencies, and others with an interest in the new standards. The full-day meeting will begin with presentations by the Board on the rulemaking process, the regulatory steps involved, and a proposed timetable for completing the standards. The agenda will include panel discussions on various topics and opportunities for public comment. Subjects to be discussed and explored include the range of equipment to be addressed, access barriers to equipment, design challenges, key issues, reference standards, and other topics encompassed by this rulemaking.

The meeting is scheduled to run from 9:00 to 5:00 and will take place at the Board's new meeting space at 1331 F Street, N.W., Suite 800, Washington, D.C. For more information on the hearing or this rulemaking, contact David Baquis at baquis@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0013 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Department of Justice Issues New Guidance on Accessible Medical Care

The Department of Justice DOJ, which regulates and enforces key provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), recently issued new technical guidance on accessible medical care. Access for people with disabilities to medical care has been problematic and the subject of DOJ compliance investigations. The 19-page guide, "Access to Medical Care for Individuals with Mobility Disabilities," outlines requirements and best practices for achieving access and covers exam rooms, including entry and circulation, exam tables and chairs, radiologic and mammography equipment, scales, available lift devices, transfer techniques, staff training, and common questions. The document is available on DOJ's ADA website at www.ada.gov.

Justice Department Advances Update of ADA Regulations

The Department of Justice (DOJ) is moving to issue final rules that would update its ADA regulations, including standards governing the construction and alteration of facilities covered by the law. On April 26, DOJ submitted final rules to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for approval. If cleared within OMB's standard 90-day review period, DOJ may publish the updated regulations in late July or early August.

DOJ's new rules will update its ADA regulations for state and local governments under title II and those for public accommodations and



commercial entities covered by title III. The pending regulations will implement with effective dates new ADA standards for title II and title III facilities that are closely based on updated guidelines previously issued by the Board. In addition, the final rules, which DOJ made available for public comment in 2008, will revise or supplement other sections of DOJ's regulations, including those covering existing facilities, service animals, policies and programs, maintenance of accessible features, auxiliary aids and services, and effective communication. DOJ had planned to issue the regulations in early 2009 but delayed publication in order to give officials of the incoming Obama Administration an opportunity to review them. For more information, visit DOJ's website at www.ada.gov. Visitors to the site can subscribe to email updates from DOJ on this and other Department activities.

DOJ's standards apply to all facilities covered by the ADA except transportation facilities, which are subject to standards issued by the Department of Transportation (DOT). DOT has already implemented updated ADA standards for transportation facilities. Similar standards are also in place under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) for most federally funded facilities. Housing facilities covered by the ABA currently remain subject to earlier standards pending the adoption of new standards by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Further information on the status of ADA and ABA standards is available on the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/ada-aba/guide.htm.

Board to Propose Updated ADA Guidelines for Buses and Vans

The Board plans to publish for public comment a notice to update portions of its ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Transportation Vehicles covering access to buses and vans. The proposal would revise the guidelines, which apply to new or remanufactured vehicles, to address new types of systems, such as bus rapid transit and low floor buses, and advances in technology, including automation of announcements. The current guidelines were issued by the Board in 1991 and later supplemented to address over-the-road buses.

In April, the Board submitted the proposed rule to the Office of Management and Budget for review and clearance. If approved on schedule, the notice will be published in early July and will be available for public comment for at least 90 days. The Board plans to hold public hearings on the proposal during the comment period. In addition, a webinar on this rulemaking is scheduled for August 5.

The Board's proposal will incorporate public input previously received on this update. In laying the groundwork for this rulemaking, the Board held several public meetings to identify and examine issues to address. In addition, the Board released for comment preliminary drafts of the rule in 2007 and 2008. Disability groups, consumers, industry groups and manufacturers and other interested parties provided recommendations on how the criteria for buses and vans should be updated. The Board plans to update sections of the guidelines covering rail systems and other modes of public transportation at a later date. For further information, visit the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/transit/ or contact Jim Pecht at pecht@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0021 (voice), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Upcoming Board Webinars

Upcoming webinars in the Board's free monthly series will cover accessible signage (July 1), the Board's update of its ADA vehicle guidelines (August 5), and airport terminals (September 2). The webinars, which are scheduled from 2:30 – 4:00 (ET), are made available in cooperation with the national network of ADA centers known as the Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs). Registration is free, but the DBTACs charge a fee to process continuing education credits. For more information, including registration instructions, visit www.accessibilityonline.org. The Board also provides training on its guidelines and standards on a regular basis at various events across the country. For more information on the Board's training program, visit the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/training.htm or contact Peggy Greenwell, the Board's Training Coordinator, at training@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0017 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Public Provides Feedback on Draft ICT Rule at Board Hearing

On May 12 the Board held a public hearing on its refresh of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Standards and Guidelines. Through this well-attended event, the Board sought feedback from the public on its draft update of standards for Federal technologies covered by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and guidelines for telecommunications products subject to Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act. Two dozen people provided testimony at the hearing, including consumers, accessibility consultants, product designers, and representatives from advocacy organizations, industry, and government.



Many speakers endorsed the overall approach of the draft rule and the efforts made to harmonize its requirements with domestic and international standards and guidelines, though some pointed to areas where harmonization could be further improved or advanced. Commenters also called attention to the Board's rulemaking process and the urgent need to expedite updates of the standards and guidelines in order to keep pace with the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the technologies they cover. Several speakers, including representatives from vending machine and lodging industry associations, addressed sections of the rule that would supplement the Board's ADA Accessibility Guidelines to address certain types of interactive transaction machines such as point-of-sales machines and self-service kiosks.

Other topics raised by speakers included the role of assistive technologies, access to product documentation and technical support, improving accessibility for people with cognitive disabilities, and issues encountered by those with hearing or vision loss or a combination of both, such as the lack of audio output for screen crawls and other forms of communication for people without vision and audio quality and frequency for people who are hard of hearing. Comments also addressed authoring tools, closed products, compatibility with assistive technologies, and product interoperability. The Board held a similar hearing in March at the 25th Annual International Technology and Persons with Disabilities Conference organized by the California State University at Northridge in San Diego.

Comments on the draft rule, which are due June 21, and hearing transcripts can be viewed online at www.regulations.gov. The Board will use the input received on this draft to prepare a proposed rule that will provide another opportunity for comment. For more information, contact Tim Creagan at creagan@access-board.gov, 202-272-0016 (v), or 202-272-0082 (TTY).

Bureau of Engraving and Printing Seeks Comment on Making Currency Accessible

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing seeks public comment on efforts to make U.S. currency accessible to people with vision impairments. In a notice published in the Federal Register on May 20, the Bureau outlined potential actions to be undertaken and posed specific questions to the public. The Bureau is proposing to add a raised tactile feature to indicate currency denomination and to improve visual access through larger numbers, higher contrast, and more distinct color schemes. In addition, the agency is also considering a supplemental program to provide currency readers free to those who need them and to explore emerging technological solutions to further improve accessibility. These actions are based on a study of the issue previously commissioned by the Bureau and stem from a ruling in a court case filed by the American Council of the Blind.



The notice specifically seeks public input on criteria for tactile and visual features, including the type and location of tactile features, the size and contrast of numerals, impacts on cash handling industries and equipment, the currency reader program, and other topics. The notice, which includes instructions on submitting comment, is available through the online edition of the Federal Register at www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html. Comments are due August 18. For further

information, contact Ellen Gano of the Bureau at (202) 874-1200 .

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.
