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ADA ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS IN LODGING ACCOMMODATIONS

The hotel industry is one of America's largest public accommodations. These lodging accommodations can be large hotels run by corporations or small mom and pop motels. In any case, these places of business must be accessible to people with disabilities in accordance to Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Under the ADA, hotels, motels, inns, and other places of lodging designed or constructed after January 26, 1993, must be usable by people with disabilities. To meet this requirement, lodging facilities must comply with certain regulations published by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). The regulations contain detailed architectural requirements called the ADA Standards for Accessible Design (Standards), 28 C.F.R. pt. 36, Appendix A.

The Standards are designed to ensure accessibility for individuals with a wide variety of disabilities, such as people who are blind or have low vision, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, people with limited use of hands or arms, and individuals with mobility impairments who use canes, crutches, braces, walkers, or wheelchairs. Thus, the Standards include architectural requirements that address the different needs of the disability community.

Lodging facilities must comply with all of the requirements in the Standards that are applicable. And, because a difference of inches, or in some cases, a difference of a fraction of an inch can pose a serious safety hazard or result in the denial of access for guests with disabilities, full compliance with the Standards is essential.

What Problems Do PVA Members Typically Face in Lodging?

Despite the ADA having been the law of the land for 30 years, and the Standards being fairly specific, barriers can still be found in many lodging facilities. Bed heights in wheelchair accessible rooms are often too tall to allow for an independent transfer. Beds on box frames prevent the use of Hoyer lifts to assist in transfers. Room temperature controls and closet hangers are often placed too high, are outside of acceptable reach ranges, or are blocked by other barriers.

What Should I Do If I Face Disability Discrimination in Lodging?

If people with disabilities encounter accessibility problems at a hotel, motel, or inn they should try to negotiate with the facility to remove the barrier to ensure their stay is possible. In the longer-term, a person with a disability can file a DOJ complaint at ADA.gov and/or file a private lawsuit in connection with encountered ADA violations.