

MYTHS V. FACTS

AIR TRAVEL ACCESSIBILITY



MYTH: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies to commercial air travel in the United States.

FACT: No, the ADA does not apply to commercial air travel. The Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) prohibits disability-based discrimination in air travel.

MYTH: Lavatories on all commercially flown airplanes in the United States must be accessible.

FACT: Under the Air Carrier Access Act, at least one lavatory on each twin-aisle airplane must be accessible to a passenger using an on-board wheelchair. Lavatories on single-aisle airplanes, which represent the vast majority of commercial air traffic within the United States, do not have to be accessible for passengers with disabilities.



MYTH: The Air Carrier Access Act requires airlines to accommodate passengers' disability-related seating accommodation needs even if it means providing a first class seat to a passenger with a coach ticket.

Airlines are not required "to provide a seat in a class of service other than the one the passenger has purchased in order to provide an accommodation." Thus, if a passenger needs a bulkhead seat that is in premium economy, then the passenger must buy a premium economy ticket even if the request for a bulkhead seat is an accommodation. Within a passenger's class of service, however, the airline must accommodate a disability-related seating selection need without requiring payment of any additional fees (for example, selecting an aisle seat).

MYTH: All wheelchairs must be gate checked under the requirements of the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA).

FACT: The ACAA allows passengers who use manual, folding wheelchairs the opportunity to have their chairs stowed in a compartment in the aircraft cabin or strapped to a row of airlines seats. Airlines choosing to stow wheelchairs using seat strapping must accommodate two chairs unless doing so would displace passengers. In that case, the second chair may be checked.

