



Ramps & Accessible Thresholds

Introduction

Ramps should be employed in addition to (rather than in place of) stairs since many ambulatory individuals find stairs easier to climb than walking on an incline.

¹ This Fact Sheet replaces ABLEDATA Fact Sheet #6, first released in 1990 and discontinued in December 1994 due to new information and standards concerning this topic.

For most wheelchair and scooter users, just one step may as well be a mountain. This, and other access barriers involving ground level differences, can be eliminated with the use of one or more ramps. Ramps should be employed in addition to (rather than in place of) stairs since many ambulatory individuals find stairs easier to climb than walking on an incline.

Thresholds at doorways can also pose problems. They may increase the risk of tripping for pedestrians and, while not always an access barrier per se, can make for a very uncomfortable ride for wheelchair users. To make the threshold accessible without structural modifications, miniature ramps can be fitted to provide the appropriate slope for a more comfortable—and safer—transition through the doorway.

This Fact Sheet on Ramps and Accessible Thresholds¹ will cover all types of incline devices for traversing raised or lowered levels including portable and permanent ramps for vans, buses, curbs, single or multiple stairs, different building levels, and pools, and telescoping and folding tracks for manual wheelchairs and four-wheeled powered chairs or scooters. Mechanical, hydraulic, or electrically powered lifts and platforms for buildings and vehicles are discussed in separate fact sheets.

The types of ramps and thresholds discussed here are appropriate to both public and private facilities and residences. The passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires that modifications to or new construction of public access areas adhere to the standards and guidelines provided for in this law. Excerpts of these guidelines are highlighted in this publication, but property managers, contractors, and business owners affected by this legislation should consult the regulations in their entirety during planning and construction of ramps, thresholds and other accessibility modifications.



