



Accessible Parking Under the ADA

When a business, state or local government agency, or other covered entity provides a parking lot, it must offer accessible parking spaces as required by the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design. Failure to do so violates the ADA. In addition, businesses or privately-owned facilities that provide goods or services to the public have a continuing ADA obligation to remove barriers to access in existing parking lots when it is readily achievable to do so. Because re-striping a parking lot is relatively inexpensive, it is readily achievable in most cases. The ADA Design Guide provides key information about how to create accessible car and van spaces and how many spaces to provide when parking lots are restriped.

In 1991, the symbol of a wheelchair on a blue and white placard was adopted nationwide. Each state could also recognize other specialized plates that would be allowed to park in designated accessible parking spots. For example, in Texas, specialized plates recognizing disabled veterans and purple heart recipients are deemed eligible.

Despite the ADA requirements, accessible parking is governed by each state according to their own individual state and municipal laws. States define who is eligible for accessible parking. For example, in Arizona, eligibility extends to persons who are unable to walk 200 feet without stopping to rest, or unable to walk without help from another person or brace, cane, crutch, wheelchair, or others assistive or prosthetic device.

Why Is This Important to PVA Members?

In order for an accessible parking space to be usable, all elements of the space must be free of obstructions: the vehicle space, the access aisle, the curb ramp, and the route that connects the parking to the accessible entrance of the building. Lack of maintenance of any one of those elements can make the whole space inaccessible. For example, for a wheelchair user to exit her vehicle, she must place her wheelchair in the access aisle, transfer from the car seat to her wheelchair, and then roll backward in the access aisle to provide clearance to close the car door. If another car parks in the aisle or if a plow loads the aisle with snow, the wheelchair user does not have sufficient room to get out of her car.

How Do You Help to Ensure Parking is Available When Needed?

There are actions people with disabilities can take to ensure that accessible parking is available to all who need it.

Do display your accessible parking permit - It is required by law that you display your accessible parking permit, including accessible parking placards or license plates, when you park. You may have a permit that legally entitles you to use the space, but if you don't display it, you could receive a ticket.

Do leave van accessible parking spaces open for ramp- or lift-equipped vehicles -Van-accessible parking spaces have a wider access aisle than standard accessible spots. The eight-foot-wide aisle provides enough space for a person who uses a ramp- or lift-equipped vehicle to lower the ramp or lift, then maneuver safely in the area between vehicles. A sign with the words “Van Accessible” and the international symbol of accessibility (wheelchair symbol) means the parking space is designed for ramp- or lift-equipped vehicles.

In contrast, access aisles next to regular accessible parking spaces are only five feet wide, which is not enough room for wheelchair users to safely exit or re-enter a van that has a lift or ramp. In addition, there are fewer van accessible parking spaces than regular accessible parking spaces in a parking lot.

Although you do have the right to park in van-accessible spaces with an accessible parking permit, it is best to reserve van-accessible spaces for van users. Otherwise, van users might not be able to find a parking space at all.

Do not use an accessible parking permit once it's expired - Accessible parking permits have expiration dates. Users should be mindful of the expiration date of their placard or license plate, and not use it after it's expired. If a placard is still needed after its expiration date, users should apply for a new one or renew the existing placard.

Do not let others use your accessible parking permit when you are not present - The owner of an accessible parking permit must be present when using the permit. Lending a permit to family members or friends so that they can use the accessible parking spaces is not only highly inappropriate but there might be legal consequences both to you and to the person who borrows your permit, including a fine and revocation of the permit.

Other Resources

The ADA National Network offers an [overview](#) of parking requirements and policies under the ADA.

[Parking Mobility](#) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community education and enforcement program designed to efficiently address accessible parking abuse in your community.

The [Accessible Parking Coalition](#) provides a collaborative resource center and visitors are encouraged to share their ideas, research, case studies, model legislation, and public education materials in order to educate the public and learn from one another.