PROJECTions

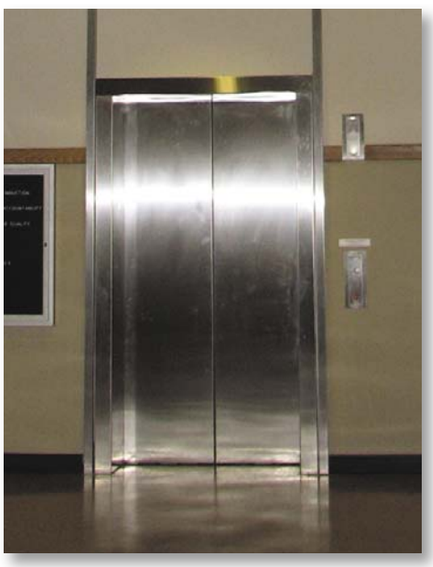
From American Constructors

Summer 2008

Texas Accessibility Standards – A Vital Component Of Construction

This summer will be the 18th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The goal of the ADA is simple – to open up all aspects of American life to people with disabilities. The ADA does this by prohibiting discrimination, establishing architectural accessibility requirements for new construction and alterations, providing technical assistance and implementing enforcement of the Act.

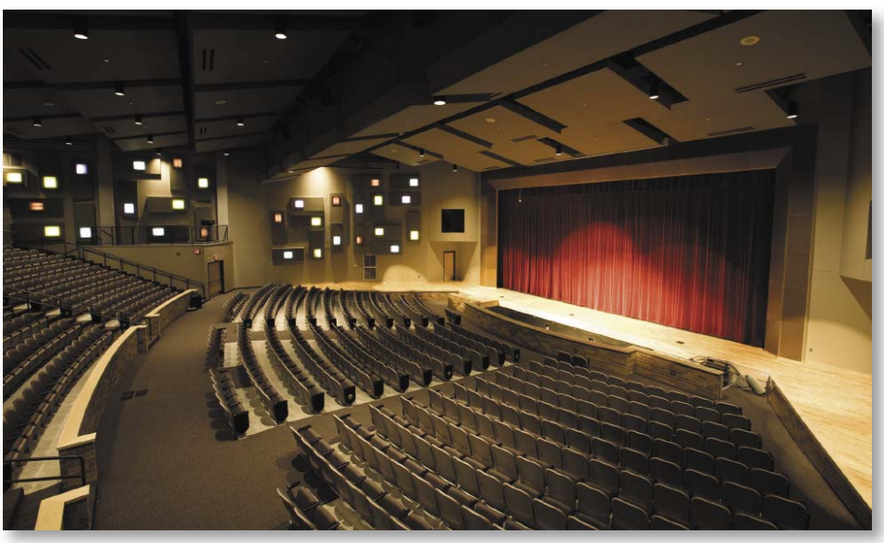
In Texas, in 1991, the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) replaced the former Architectural Barriers Program which had been in place since the original Architectural Barriers Act in Texas of 1969. Under House Bill 39, 72nd Legislature, 1991, TDLR was required to pursue equivalency certification from the US Department of Justice as provided in the ADA. Accordingly, TDLR adopted the Texas Accessibility Standards (TAS) on December 17, 1993. TAS applies to subject buildings and facilities constructed on or after April 1, 1994.



Examples of commonplace TAS items are elevators which provide access to all rooms throughout a building (see photo above), and wide aisles and wheelchair seating in performing arts centers or auditorium venues (see photo below).

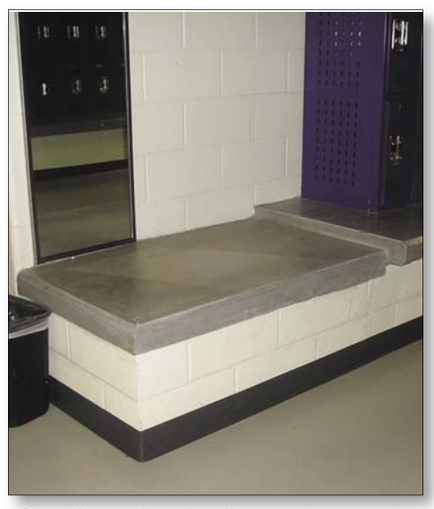
At American Constructors we take the implementation of the standards during the pre-construction and construction phases very seriously, not only because it is a vital part of construction, but also due to the obvious benefits TAS provides to the quality of life for all individuals. Over the years we have learned some very good lessons for identifying requirements early on, participated in evaluating compliance options and ensured that there are activities in the schedule for construction, inspection and approval of TAS requirements.

In this issue we highlight some interesting TAS field construction examples, provide a summary compliance process for both the pre-construction and construction phases and some tips for avoiding common compliance violations.



PROJECT EXAMPLE ONE

Review all areas for TAS – On one high school project there were several athletic areas including play fields, gymnasiums, training rooms, offices and locker rooms. During design coordination it was identified that the required TAS seating and benches in the locker rooms were not included. Adding these requirements during the design phase allowed for proper planning and coordination with the overall locker count and student traffic flow in these areas.



Specific seat/bench ADA requirements in typical high school locker room.

PROJECT EXAMPLE TWO

TAS Variance – Requesting a Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation's (TDLR) TAS inspector to conduct a courtesy review for early comments as work is completed provides an opportunity to identify TAS compliance issues that can not be readily seen during normal plan review and coordination. There typically is a cost for these reviews, but we have found it to be extremely beneficial and well worth the dollars spent.

Corrective work identified in TDLR reports is open for variance review. With the following example, TDLR approved a TAS variance to install a wheel chair lift to provide access to the entrance of the school after receiving an application from the owner outlining the hardship associated with the cost of construction for switchback ramps, landings and railings. When a variance is desired, the application

Tech Tips

Tips for Avoiding Common TAS Violations

1. Use the same Registered Accessibility Specialist (RAS) that reviewed the plans during the plan review process to do the on site compliance inspection.
2. Get the RAS to do a courtesy review prior to completion, but after most sidewalks, ramps, doors, and fixtures are installed to flag any possible violations so they can be corrected before the "officially documented" ADA inspection.
3. In K-12 school construction, make sure you are familiar with the differences in regulations based on age.
4. Know the accessible route to the project from off site as it will need to connect to your site location's accessible route.
5. Review ADA clearances during door and frame submittal reviews.
6. Flag possible clearance violations in rest rooms using the finish wall to finish wall dimensions taking into account whether the finish is paint, tile, etc.
7. Verify that the designers allowed for construction tolerances in the slope and length of sidewalks and ramps.
8 Always use a digital level when forming sidewalks and ramps and double check forms with the digital level prior to pouring.
9. Know the HC ramps' surface requirements prior to pouring the ramps. It can vary from city to city and from owner to owner.
10. When pouring concrete on a ramp surface that is to be grooved, use pea gravel in the mix in lieu of the standard aggregate size to make grooving easier during finishing.

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is published for the friends and team members of American Constructors.

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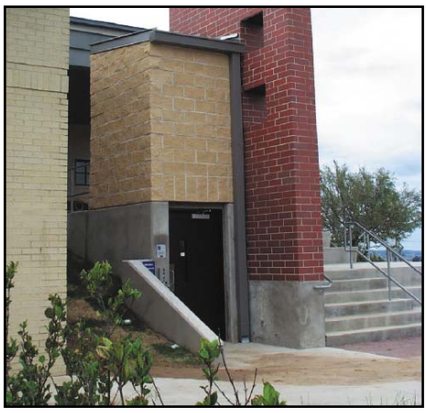
Texas Accessibility Standards – A Vital Component Of Construction (Cont.)

process needs to be facilitated early to avoid a compressed schedule in the event the application is denied.



A wheelchair lift was more economical than extensive ramps.

PROJECT EXAMPLE THREE

Drinking Fountain cane detectors – As part of a renovation project, we installed double drinking fountain assemblies on two floors. The drinking fountain units themselves were installed in accordance with ADA standards for spacing, accessibility and height. However they were not recessed from the corridor and TAS requires that a cane detection apron or a fixed barrier be provided at the higher fountain to warn the blind and seeing impaired of the hazard. These aprons were installed prior to final acceptance.

Readily available skirt attaches to higher fountain.

PROJECT EXAMPLE FOUR

Individual rest room requirements – At an elementary school there are several classrooms with individual bathrooms. These bathrooms must be TAS compliant. The construction drawings showed these rooms to be exactly five feet by five feet clear. These dimensions met the minimum clear space requirement but left no room for construction field conditions or tolerances. Accordingly, the plans were changed to insure the TAS standards would be met when these bathrooms were constructed.

Provide room dimensions that will account for construction tolerances and clearances.

NEW ADDRESS !

The post office has decided that since our building faces Gaines Ranch Loop instead of MoPac, our street address should reflect that. So please update your records to our new street address as follows:

From: 4330 South MoPac

To: 4330 Gaines Ranch Loop

Our suite number and the rest of our address will remain the same.

Compliance Process

Pre-construction Phase

Register the project

1. Owner typically designates architect as compliance agent through Owner Agent Designation Form
2. Agent completes project registration form
3. Agent submits plans and specs to TDLR or the Registered Accessibility Specialist (RAS)
4. Owner Agent fills out Proof of submission form

TAS plan review

1. RAS sends out deficiency letter to Owner Agent
2. Architect will then include changes as Addendum to bid documents
3. ADA requirements incorporated into construction

Post-construction Phase

1. Request for inspection form issued to RAS by agent
2. Issued within 30 days of completion of project
3. RAS issues inspection report to Owner
4. Architect/agent coordinates issues for correction of violations
5. Agent completes Architectural Barriers - Inspection Response form
6. Architect submits to RAS
7. RAS issues a confirmation of approval letter to the Owner