



Inspections

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Your House A to Z

Jack L. Werner Ph.D.



"ADA Compliant" — what does it mean to those who need it?

By Jack L. Werner, Ph.D.

I am asking you as you read this to look at your home, your place of business... Most of us have someone in our lives that has a physical disability. What could you do to make your place more accessible?

What ADA compliance means can best be explained by those who need it. Here is a letter from a fellow Rotarian in Santa Fe.

"For 50 years, my husband Don and I have loved traveling. In recent years, he has had to use a wheelchair full-time, but we have continued to travel. It hasn't been easy. Considerable advance preparation is required. A hotel or motel claim as "ADA compliant" or "handicapped accessible" is not necessarily accurate.

As seen in...

The City Sentinel

Here's how it works: I go to the websites of hotels and motels. Those that say nothing about accessibility I set aside. For the others, I call and inquire:

--Are there at least 30 inches of unimpeded space to one side of the toilet, for "parallel parking" of the wheelchair and easy transfer?

--How high is the bed? (The range should be between 19" and 23" for ease of transfer)

--Is there adequate space next to the bed for a wheelchair to maneuver?

The desk person assures me that the bathroom is large, with lots of bars and a roll-in shower. I explain that we can live without a shower, but not without a toilet, and would he/she please measure and let me know if the 30 inch-space is available? (The height of the toilet, not always ADA compliant, can also further the difficulty of transfer.)

Then the desk person says the facility has wonderful new beds. That generally means higher bed frames and another measurement. Occasionally, we can get a high bed frame removed.

Sometimes a remodel adds thick carpets, creating a marsh-like feel to the wheelchair movement.

Asking about everything is impossible, but if the toilet and the bed don't work, we can't stay. The other issues we just struggle with.

Finally, we have found that it is essential to confirm and reconfirm to make sure the actual room we reserved will be available when we arrive.

We would like to explain to the entire lodging industry what our issues are, in the hopes that we will be able to trust a lodging's website that states 'ADA compliant' or 'handicapped accessible.'

Jack L. Werner, Ph.D., is the owner of A to Z Inspections. He was the first designated Master Inspector by ORCIA (Oklahoma Residential and Commercial Inspection Association). Werner holds a degree in construction from OSU and teaches Universal Design & Build for the National Association of Home Builders. He was honored by the Oklahoma Professional Women in Building division of the Oklahoma State Home Builders Association as 2011 member of the year for his contributions to the organization. He can be reached at 405-412-7861.

