

A high-angle photograph of a person in a wheelchair navigating a wooden boardwalk. The boardwalk is made of weathered wooden planks and runs diagonally across the frame. The person is wearing a dark shirt, blue jeans, and a hat. The surrounding area is filled with tall, dry grasses. A dark teal overlay covers the top right portion of the image, containing the title text.

Built Environment Accessibility Standard

Plain Language

DISCLAIMER

This is a plain language version of the Built Environment Accessibility Regulation made under the Accessibility Act. This version is not a substitute for the Regulation and should not be solely relied upon when determining how to interpret or follow the Regulation. In the event of a conflict or inconsistency between the plain language version and the Regulation, the Regulation takes precedence. This document is for general information and intended to assist people in understanding the Regulation.

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Introduction

The Government of Nova Scotia has made rules about accessibility. They are called 'Accessibility Standards.' They tell people how to make places and activities accessible. They help remove barriers for people with disabilities. They can stop new barriers from being made.

These rules are for the 'built environment.' These are the places and spaces made by people. Here are some examples.

- Spaces where we live, work, learn, and play
- The inside and outside of buildings
- Outdoors spaces like trails, parks, and beaches.

The *Accessibility Act* said the government was going to make these rules.

This is a plain language version of the rules.

1. Citation

The official name of the rules is the *Built Environment Accessibility Standard Regulations*.

2. Definitions

There are many words with special meanings in the rules. Here are the meanings of those words.

■ Accessible parking space

This is a place where people with disabilities can park. People need a special pass to use it.

■ Accessible pedestrian signal

A pedestrian is anybody who is walking or using a mobility device like a wheelchair. This is a signal for people who are blind or cannot see well. It tells them when it is safe to cross a street.

■ Barrier-free entrance

This is an entrance that can be used by everyone.

- People who walk
- People who use canes or crutches
- People who use wheelchairs
- People who are blind or cannot see well

The Nova Scotia Building Code says how to build one.

■ Beach access routes

This is a way for people to get to a beach. It could go from a parking lot, a trail, or another outdoor place. This is for beaches that are meant to be used by the public.

■ Clear floor space

This is the space that a person with a disability needs in an area. It does not have furniture or other things in the way. It has room for a person with a device like a wheelchair, scooter or walker to be able to turn around in the space.

■ Colour contrast

This is about how well one colour stands out from another colour. It is easier to see things when the colours are very different. Important things should have colours that are very different from the other colours in the area.

■ Curb ramp

This is a slope or slant in the curb. It goes from a road to a sidewalk or path. It lets people with wheelchairs move safely.

■ Construction

The phase of a project that involves the physical alteration or modification of any aspect of the built environment and occurs after the planning and design phases of the project.

■ Construction Zone

means a physical area affected by construction.

■ CSA B651

This is the name of another standard. It is from the Canadian Standards Association. It is called Accessible design for the built environment. It has rules to make sure buildings and other spaces can be used by people with disabilities.

■ Dynamic Symbol of Access

This is a symbol to mark a place that is accessible. It shows a person in a wheelchair. The person is leaning forward like they are moving.

■ Firm and stable ground surface

This is a hard floor or ground. It is solid. Wheels do not sink into it. The end of a crutch or a cane does not sink into it.

■ **Frontcountry campground**

This is a campground people can get to with a car. They do not have to walk to reach it.

■ **Highway**

This is any place made for people to drive cars and other vehicles.

It includes all kinds of roads, like the following.

- Public streets
- Highways
- Sidewalks
- Lanes
- Roads
- Alleys

It also includes places that are not roads. Here are some examples.

- A place in a park that people drive on to get to a campground or beach
- A place on private property that people drive on to get to a building or parking lot

It does not include places that are only for off-road vehicles. These are not highways.

■ **Illumination**

This is how much light there is in a place. It is the light from things like lamps and spotlights.

■ **International Symbol of Access**

This is a symbol to mark a place that is accessible. It shows a person sitting in a wheelchair.

■ **Lux**

This is the unit used to measure illumination. It measures things like how bright a light bulb is.

■ **Multi-purpose recreation centre**

This is a building used for recreation. It is open to the public. People go there to exercise, play sports and do other activities. It has special rooms and areas for different activities.

A multi-purpose recreation centre has at least two of the following.

- A gym
- A pool
- An ice rink or pad
- A running or walking track
- A court for sports like squash or tennis
- An exercise room
- A community meeting room

■ Municipality

This is a place in the province with its own government. It could be any of the following.

- A region
- A county
- A city
- A town
- A village

■ Nova Scotia Building Code

These are the rules for how to build new buildings. They are made by the government of Nova Scotia.

■ On-street parking

This is a parking spot on a street or road. It is there for people to go to shops, offices and other places. The parking can be free or people can pay for it.

■ Operating controls

These are things we use to make something work. They could be any of the following.

- Door handles
- Locks
- Light switches
- Faucets

■ Outdoor play space

This is a public area for children and caregivers to play. It has things to play on like the following.

- Climbing bars
- Play structures
- Swings
- Natural things like logs, rocks and sand

■ Outdoor public eating area

This is an outdoor place for people to eat. It can have tables or benches. It can be a part of a bigger space like the following.

- Parks
- Hospital grounds
- School grounds

■ Parking area

This is a parking lot that is not part of a building. It could be next to a building or connected to a building. It is made for people to park on for short periods of time. The parking can be free or people can pay for it.

■ Pedestrian facility

This is any place made for people who are walking or using a mobility device. It includes the following areas.

- Sidewalks
- Crosswalks
- Intersection
- Streets
- Curb
- Curb ramps
- Walkways
- Paths

■ Prescribed public sector body

This is a group named by the government. It will have a specific job in making the rules. It is named in the Accessibility General Regulations.

■ Recreational trail

This is an outdoor trail for people to use for walking, strolling, or riding a bike. Someone builds it and looks after it. It could be any of the following groups.

- A government
- A public group
- A service group
- A business

■ Slip-resistant

This is a surface that is not slippery. It is made so that people can walk safely.

■ Temporary Workplace Traffic Control Manual

This is a manual about moving around construction sites. It is made by the Department of Public Works.

■ Walking

'Walking' means someone is moving around the way they usually do.

This means anyone who is moving around. It can be people who walk on their own. It could be people who use wheelchairs or scooters. It could be people who use crutches. It could be people with low vision or blind people who use canes.

3. Application

These rules are for the places and spaces made by people.

Some of the rules are only for specific groups or people. The rules will say who that is. All the other rules are for anyone who owns or looks after places and spaces in Nova Scotia.

These rules have two parts, as follows.

- **Rules about how to design and build places and spaces**

Any places or spaces built after April 1, 2026, have to follow these rules.

When places and spaces are changed, the changes have to follow these rules.

- **Rules about how to plan to make places and spaces accessible**

These rules say that some organizations have to make plans.

There are other rules about places and spaces. Here are some of them.

The Government of Canada makes rules for some places and spaces. Those places have to follow the Government of Canada rules. They do not have to follow these rules.

There are rules in the Nova Scotia Building Code. They are rules about how to build places and spaces. These rules are not for things that are in the Building Code.

There are rules in the Nova Scotia Fire Code. They are rules for making places and spaces safe when there is a fire. These rules are not for things that are in the Fire Code.

People who own or look after buildings that have more than three different places for people to live have to follow these rules.

4. Public use

For the purposes of these regulations, an aspect of the built environment that is primarily designed or intended for public use has all of the following characteristics:

- (a) it is open to members of the public on a continuous, periodic or occasional basis;
- (b) a fee may or may not be charged for its use.

Part I

How to Make Accessible Places and Spaces

ABOUT THIS PART

This part is about making accessible places and spaces. It says what they need to be accessible.

Many people and groups make places and spaces, like the following.

- The Government of Nova Scotia
- Governments of cities and towns
- Public and private groups
- Businesses

The Regulations say which places and spaces have to be accessible. The people who make them have to follow these rules.

5. Barrier-Free Path of Travel

A barrier-free path is a way to move between places. It is also called a barrier-free path of travel. It has to be accessible for everyone.

A path can have different parts, like the following.

- Sidewalks
- Ramps
- Moving walkways
- Elevators and lifts

All the parts have to be accessible.

A barrier-free path must be made in the following way.

- Is it wide.
- Is it flat or almost flat from side to side.
- It does not have stairs or steps.
- It has ramps to go up and down if it is too steep.
- It has a lift or elevator if it has to go up or down a long way.
- It has a smooth surface over small bumpy areas like doorways.

The surface of the path must be made in the following way.

- It is smooth and solid.
- It is not slippery.
- It does not have big holes. Wheelchairs and canes could get stuck in big holes.
- It can have long skinny openings like spaces between boards.
 - These have to go from side to side across the path.

Barrier-free paths have to be kept clear in the following ways.

- Water needs to drain off them.
- They should not get puddles or patches of ice.
- Some buildings have drains for rainwater. These drains cannot put water on the path.

6. Tactile Attention Indicators

Tactile attention indicators are places on a path that have special bumps. The bumps are there so people can feel them with their foot or a cane. They are used to mark things like crosswalks and stairways. This helps people who are blind or cannot see well. It tells them to be careful.

The bumps must have the following details.

- Small and round
- Have round tops
- Stick up a little bit
- Are all the same size
- Feel different from the path when walked on

The bumps are put together in a group on the ground. They are put in a square pattern. The square pattern must be a different colour from the rest of the path. It must be easy to see.

The ground where the bumps are placed must be a hard surface. It must not be slippery.

7. Curb Ramps

A curb ramp is a slope from a road onto a sidewalk. The ramps must have the following details.

- It must go in the same direction that people walk.
- It must be wide.
- It must have a gentle slope.
- It must be flat or almost flat from side to side.
- It must have sloped sides.
 - The sloped sides keep people from tripping or getting stuck.

A curb ramp at a crosswalk has a tactile attention indicator. The indicator must be as wide as the ramp. It must be on the flat sidewalk in front of the ramp.

8. Exterior Ramps

An exterior ramp is not part of a building. It is part of a barrier-free path.

An exterior ramp must have the following details.

- It is wide.
- It has a gentle slope.
- It is flat or almost flat from side to side.
- It has flat sections at the top and bottom.
- It has flat sections anywhere it changes direction.
- It has some flat sections if it is long.

9. Site Selection Evaluation

Site selection is when someone picks a spot to build something. Places and spaces should be built somewhere accessible. Government and Prescribed Public Sector Body must pay attention to the features of sites. Site features include the following details.

- Be close to public transportation.
- Be close to walking paths.
- Be close to the people who use it.
- Have accessible parking spaces.
- Have safe places to drop people off.
- Have ground that is easy to move around on.

10. Exterior Stairs

Exterior stairs are not part of a building. They are outside.

Some stairs go to barrier-free paths. People use them to get to the path. These have to be safe and accessible in the following ways.

- The steps:
 - Are not slippery
 - Are not high
 - Are not close together
 - Are not different sizes
 - Do not have open spaces under them
 - The front edges do not stick out
 - The front edges are marked in a different color.

- There is open space above the stairs.
 - There are not things in the way that a person could hit their head on.
- There are tactile attention indicators at the top of the stairs.
- There are handrails on the sides of the stairs.
- If the stairs are above the ground:
 - There is a railing to keep people from falling off
 - The stairway does not need a railing if it is beside a wall.

11. Accessible Parking Spaces in Parking Areas

Parking areas are places to park that are not part of a building. They must have accessible parking spaces.

Every parking area needs at least one accessible space. Big parking lots need more. A parking lot with more than 100 spaces needs 4 accessible spaces.

An accessible parking space must have the following details.

- It is on a barrier-free path.
- It is big enough for cars and vans.
- It has a wide space beside it to fit wheelchairs and ramps.
- It is marked as accessible. The mark can be either of the following.
 - The International Symbol of Access
 - The Dynamic Symbol of Access
- It has a sign above the ground that is easy to see.

The barrier-free path must go to the parking lot entrance. It must start at the accessible spaces. The path must have the following features.

- Signs that show where there are places to cross traffic.
 - The signs must be easy to see.
- Bright lighting
- Curb ramps to go up or down
- Tactile attention indicators at every ramp
- Markings on the pavement to show the path

Some parking lots do not need accessible spaces. Parking lots for the following vehicles do not need them.

- Buses
- Delivery trucks
- Police cars
- Ambulances
- Vehicles that have been towed away
- Small carpool lots

12. On-street Accessible Parking Spaces

Some places have parking on the street. This has to include accessible parking. People with disabilities must be consulted. They should be asked the following questions.

- How many spaces are needed?
- Where should the spaces be?
- How should the spaces be made?
- How should the spaces be marked?

Some on-street parking is beside a curb. It needs a barrier-free path to a curb ramp. Accessible on-street parking spaces must have the following details.

- Spaces are big enough for cars and vans.
- There is a wide space behind them to fit a wheelchair.

13. Sidewalks

Sidewalks have to be made with these special rules.

- Rules made by the Transportation Association of Canada
- Rules in the CSA B651 standard

All sidewalks must follow these rules.

Sidewalks must be a barrier-free path. People should be able to walk easily. They should be able to stay on the sidewalk.

Sidewalks should not have anything that blocks people, like the following.

- Signs
- Banners
- Flowerpots and planters
- Garbage cans
- Chairs and benches

14. Temporary Sidewalks

A temporary sidewalk is put in for a short time. It is not permanent. It could be for the following reasons.

- Sidewalk cafes
- Restaurant patios
- Construction areas

These rules are for temporary sidewalks put in after April 1, 2026.

Temporary sidewalks must be made in the following way.

- It is smooth and has a solid surface.
- It is not slippery.

- It is safe to walk on.
- It does not block people who are walking.
- It is wide enough for people and wheelchairs.
- It has a wall or railing next to places that cars drive.
 - The wall has reflectors to help people see.
- It can be covered.
- It has open space above it.

There are not things in the way that a person could hit their head on. Temporary sidewalks in construction areas need signs. The signs tell people where to walk. The Temporary Workplace Traffic Control Manual says what signs to put in.

Some temporary sidewalks have lights. These lights must follow these rules.

- Cannot block traffic lights
- Cannot look like traffic lights
- Cannot be in the way of people or cars
- Cannot make it harder to see
- Cannot shine light into nearby buildings
- Cannot move or look like they move

Some construction areas cannot have temporary sidewalks. There is not enough room. The ground is not flat. These need to have a safe crosswalk. The crosswalk goes to a barrier-free sidewalk. This lets people go around the area safely.

A temporary sidewalk could block a building entrance. It could block the barrier-free path. If it does this, it must have a ramp. The ramp must give a new barrier-free way to get to the building.

15. Pedestrian Control Signals

These are signals to help people move safely around cars. Signals say when it is safe to cross. The signal makes sounds for people who are blind or cannot see well. It tells them when it is safe to cross a street.

The Transportation Association of Canada has rules for these signals. The rules say how to make them accessible. This lets people with disabilities use them.

All new signals have to follow these rules. When old signals are being replaced they have to follow these rules.

16. Placement of Defibrillators

A defibrillator is a medical device. It is used when someone's heart has stopped. Many

places have public defibrillators. These are for first aid.

These rules are for new defibrillators. They are for public buildings with a barrier-free entrance. A new defibrillator needs to be placed in the following ways.

- Must be on a barrier-free path
- Must be next to a large clear floor space
- Must not be too high off the ground

Some defibrillators stick out from the wall. People could bump into them. Defibrillators that stick out need to be closer to the floor. This lets a blind person find them using a cane.

17. Lockers

Multi-purpose recreation centres have lockers. Lockers are places for people to store personal things. They can store their clothes. They can store purses, wallets and phones.

There must be at least one accessible locker. Big centres need more. A centre with over 100 lockers needs 4 accessible lockers.

Accessible lockers must have the following details.

- Are on a barrier-free path
- Are beside a large clear floor space
- Are close to an accessible bench or changing area
- Have doors that do not block the clear floor space
- Have handles and locks that are not too high off the floor
- Can be opened easily with one hand
- Can be opened by people whose hands or fingers do not work well
- Do not have any storage on top of them

18. Pools

Public swimming pools must be accessible. This means indoor and outdoor pools.

An accessible pool must have the following details.

- It has:
 - a ramp into the water
 - a pool lift to put people into the water.
- It has tactile attention indicators all around it.
- It has easy-to-see markings on its edges.
- It has easy-to-see markings where people go in and out of the water.

19. Outdoor Public Eating Areas

Outdoor public eating areas must have places for everyone. There must be accessible tables.

- All eating areas must have at least one accessible table.
- For larger eating areas, 1 out of every 5 tables must be accessible.

Accessible tables must have the following details.

- Tables are on a barrier-free path.
- Tables are on a solid surface.
- There is open space around them.
- The open space is on a solid surface.
- Tables have open space underneath them. This lets people in wheelchairs sit at the table.

20. Benches

Benches that are beside a barrier-free path must be accessible.

An accessible bench must have the following details.

- It is on a solid surface.
 - The surface is a different colour so people can see it.
- It has open space beside it for wheelchairs, crutches or canes.
- The open space is on a solid surface.
- The open space is not part of the path.
- It has seats that are not too high or too low.
- It does not have sharp edges.

21. Campgrounds

Campgrounds must have accessible campsites. All campgrounds must have at least one. Big campgrounds need more. A campground with over 150 campsites needs at least 4.

An accessible campsite must have the following details.

- It is on a solid surface.
- It has a barrier-free path to a place to get drinking water.
- It has a barrier-free path to an accessible washroom.
- It has an accessible picnic table.

Campgrounds have places to get drinking water. This is water that is safe to drink. These are called 'potable water stations.' Campgrounds must have accessible water stations.

An accessible water station must have the following details.

- It is on a barrier-free path.
- It has open space beside it for wheelchairs, crutches or canes.
- It can be used with one hand.
- It can be used by people whose hands or fingers do not work well.
- It has open space underneath. This lets people in wheelchairs use it.
- It is not too high off the ground.

22. Outdoor Play Spaces

Outdoor play spaces must be accessible.

An accessible outdoor play space must have the following details.

- It has a barrier-free path to buildings.
- It has a barrier-free path to sidewalks.
- It is on a solid surface.
- It has room for children and caregivers to move around. It has room for wheelchairs, crutches or canes.
- It has things people with disabilities can play with, like the following.
 - Things to touch and feel
 - Things to move
 - Things that let them move

23. Outdoor Classrooms

Some schools have outdoor classrooms. These must be accessible.

An accessible outdoor classroom must have the following details.

- It has a barrier-free path to the school.
- It is on a solid surface.
- It has room for people to move around. It has room for wheelchairs, crutches or canes.

24. Outdoor Water Bottle Filling Station

An outdoor water bottle filling station is a place people can fill water bottles. It has water that is safe to drink. Bottle filling stations must be accessible.

An accessible bottle filling station must have the following details.

- It is on a barrier-free path.
- It has open space beside it for wheelchairs, crutches or canes.

- It can be used with one hand.
- It can be used by people whose hands or fingers do not work well.
- It has open space underneath. This lets people in wheelchairs use it.
- It is not too high off the ground.

Part II

Plans for Accessible Places and Spaces

This section talks about plans for accessible places and spaces. The Government makes plans. Other people who look after places and spaces make plans.

25. Availability of plans

These rules say that some organizations have to make plans. These plans must be finished by April 1, 2026. The public has to be able to see the plans when they are finished.

26. Development of plan for accessible outdoor spaces

The Government will plan accessible outdoor spaces. These include trails, parks, beaches and outdoor play spaces.

The plan will divide Nova Scotia into areas called regions. Every region will have the following spaces.

- At least 1 accessible trail
- At least 1 accessible park
- At least 1 beach access route, if there are any beaches in the region
- At least 10 accessible outdoor play spaces

These outdoor spaces will be finished by 2030.

The Government will talk to the following people when they make the plan.

- People with disabilities
- Municipalities
- Experts who know about trails and outdoor spaces

The Government will decide what the regions are. They will think about the following things.

- How many people live there

- The land and the forests, hills, lakes and coastline
- The things that are already there like roads, buildings, buses and transportation
- How far outdoor spaces are from where people live

The public has to be able to see the plan when it is finished.

27. Snow and Ice Control

Some people look after places for people to walk on, like paths and sidewalks. They must plan to remove snow and ice from these places. The plans will make sure the places are kept clear. This includes accessible places.

The public has to be able to see these plans.

28. Maintenance of Parking Areas

People who look after parking areas must plan to take care of them. This includes anything that makes the area accessible. They must check for damage. They must fix any damage.

Markings like access symbols and parking lines have to be painted so people can see them. Places people walk have to be kept safe to walk on.

The plan has to include maintaining the following details.

- Accessibility symbols
- Parking space lines
- Pathways
- Accessibility signs

The public has to be able to see these plans.

29. Accessible Entrances

People who look after buildings must plan to take care of accessible entrances. The plan must make sure entrances are not blocked.

The plan will make sure of the following.

- Nothing is put in front of an entrance that stops people from using it.
- Nothing is put on a pathway that stops people from getting to an entrance.

The public has to be able to see these plans.

30. Fire Emergency Evacuation Plan

People who own buildings where people live must have an Emergency Evacuation Plan. This plan says what to do in an emergency.

Buildings with more than 4 places to live must have a plan. It has to be kept at the main entrance. This is the entrance most people use to come and go. People who come in the building have to be able to see the plan.

The plan must have the following details.

- What to do if there is a fire
 - Calling the fire department
 - Telling people there is a fire
 - Getting out of the building
 - Helping people with disabilities get out of the building
 - Helping fight the fire
- Who will make sure everyone gets out
- How people will be taught about helping get people out

The building owner has to look at the plan once a year. The owner should change the plan if anything in the building changes. For example, if more places to live are built. Or if there are changes made to the entrances to the building.

