



GSA Public Buildings Service



removing
architectural barriers



We strive to lead the industry.

A leader in public accessibility in the building industry, the General Services Administration (GSA) has demonstrated the successful implementation of the first public accessibility law, the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) of 1968, which sets standards for all federally funded facilities.

History

The ABA requires facilities designed, built, altered or leased with certain federal funds to be accessible to persons with disabilities. The ABA designates GSA, the United States Postal Service, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Defense as the agencies tasked to create the standards to implement the ABA.

In the 1970s, GSA's Public Buildings Service (PBS) implemented a voluntary retrofit program, which made most of the owned and long-term leased GSA facilities comply with the minimum ABA standards. The program lasted six years and cost approximately \$27 million. GSA played a major role in formulating the accessibility policy that resulted in the publication of the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS) in August 1984. The UFAS brought all federal agencies under common accessibility standards for the first time, and was the model for the future state/local government and private sector guidelines created after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990.

Since the publication of the UFAS, all new federal facilities undergoing major space renovations and alterations have been required to be fully accessible. In addition, in 1984, GSA issued a policy on accessibility in leased space because no leasing provisions were included in the UFAS.

GSA and Accessibility

Since the 1970s, GSA has been at the forefront of removing architectural barriers in our public buildings. PBS manages the National Accessibility Program for GSA, and has demonstrated a continuous commitment to provide accessible facilities. In November 2005, GSA published a new accessibility standard (the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standard or ABAAS) in the Federal Register, effective May 2006, to replace UFAS. However, GSA policy still requires the use of local accessibility standards if they are more stringent than ABAAS.

The Administrator of General Services, or designee, is a member of the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (the Access Board), an agency of the federal government which oversees compliance of federal agencies with the implementing standards of the ABA. The Administrator has designated the Deputy Administrator as the GSA board member. The National Accessibility Program provides liaison and technical staff support for the Administrator and Deputy Administrator, and responds to accessibility complaints against GSA facilities. The National Accessibility Program also helps to develop accessibility policy and provides ABAAS interpretations to other federal agencies, designers, private citizens and accessibility organizations on a daily basis.

The National Accessibility Officer is GSA's liaison to the Access Board and coordinator for the national program. Each of GSA's 11 regions has appointed a Regional Accessibility Officer to oversee the regional program. These regional officers are notified whenever a complaint is made against a GSA facility in their region. They provide support and guidance so that all complaints are quickly answered and that responses are the same for similar problems. They also provide technical advice, in consultation with the national officer, for accessibility issues related to all aspects of the PBS design and construction program.

The number of accessibility complaints at GSA's buildings has dramatically declined in recent years due largely to the hard work and dedication of GSA's regional staff, who are continuously striving to follow the accessibility laws and standards.

Success through Performance Measures

PBS emphasizes performance measures as an integral part of the periodic performance review process. All associates, design professionals, contractors, project managers and vendors are held accountable in GSA's efforts to assure compliance with accessibility laws and GSA policy. The success of PBS's modernization and new construction projects has served to provide the most effective performance measure.

Visit our website at www.gsa.gov to learn more about GSA's National Accessibility Program.



Smarter Solutions

Center for Federal Buildings and Modernizations

Office of the Chief Architect

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