

Accessible Design Considerations for Employers

Every employer can take steps to improve the built environment for employees with both permanent and temporary disabilities. Many short-term improvements can be made with minimum investment, while larger projects can be planned for future renovations. The Rick Hansen Foundation suggests reviewing these key areas of your workplace and guidelines when planning for accessibility.

PARKING

Provide a minimum of one to three accessible parking spaces for every 50 available, and ensure they:

- Are easy to find, with clear signage
- Have adequate dimensions with an adjacent access aisle
- Provide safe and convenient access path to building entrance
- Provide shelter for protection from the weather



ENTRANCE AND INTERIOR DOORS

- Install power-operated doors at all main entrances, secure access points, high traffic areas, and washrooms.
- Ensure doors that are not power-operated are:
 - Either free swinging or have properly adjusted door-closer mechanisms so they're easy to open and stay open longer;
 - Equipped with lever-style handles.

ILLUMINATION

- Ensure lighting levels are even throughout the interior office environment.
- Provide the option for task lighting at each employee's desk and at reception counters where people will need to read or write.

ACOUSTICS

- Install hearing loops in meeting and conference rooms, and auditoriums.
- Provide quiet spaces for staff to work and take breaks away from internal and external sources of noise.
- Add sound dampening where people are expected to talk.

WORKSTATIONS/WORK SPACE

- Provide consistent, personalized work areas with adjustable height tables and chairs.
- Ensure outlets and controls are within accessible reach (500 mm if reaching over a desk, or 400–1100 mm if on a wall with no obstructions).
- Ensure storage facilities are accessible for staff of all abilities and are not blocked by any obstacles.
- Ensure floors and walls are colour contrasting in work areas and connecting hallways, with no busy patterns.
- Provide a simple and efficient process to request required technology such as large monitors, screen reader software, input devices, and high quality headsets.
- In open-plan offices, have clearly defined circulation routes; for example, use floor surfaces of contrasting colours or floor coverings with a change in texture.

LUNCHROOMS/KITCHEN

- Ensure the lunchroom has clear space for maneuvering, accessible height tables (730 and 860 mm from the floor), and a variety of chair options with and without armrests.
- Ensure kitchen has knee space under the sink, lever-handle or sensor controlled faucets, condiments and dishes at accessible heights, and a work space adjacent to appliances.

WASHROOMS/SHOWERS

- Equip universal washrooms with grab bars, toilet paper dispensers, and other amenities mounted at accessible heights and locations (Mount amenities at heights between 1100–1200 mm centreline. The horizontal portion of the grab bar should be at 750–850 mm above the ground. The vertical bar should be mounted 150 mm in front of toilet. The closest edge of the toilet paper dispenser should be mounted 300 mm from the front of the toilet, at a height between 600–800 mm from the floor.)
- Provide easy-to-use accessories such as sensor controlled faucets and hand dryers.
- Accessible showers with adjustable height adult change table.

EMERGENCY EXITS

- Ensure an accessible refuge on each exit stairway with adequate room for expected number of wheelchair users, but two at a minimum.
- Provide an evacuation chair or similar device in refuge spaces and train staff on how to use it safely.
- Mount evacuation instructions at an accessible height (no higher than 1,200 mm from the floor) and include large-sized text and no glare cover.
- Include visual fire alarms throughout building and where people may expect to be alone.

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Accessibility
Certification™

Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC) is a LEED-style rating system that evaluates the accessibility of commercial, institutional, and multi-unit residential buildings and sites. The first of its kind in Canada, RHFAC uses a comprehensive rating scale and consistent methodology to determine a site's overall level of meaningful access, and certifies accessible built environments. Learn more at www.rickhansen.com/rhfac



Presidents Group member SAP Labs Canada was awarded the first ever Rick Hansen Foundation 'Accessibility Certified Gold' rating in the business category. Read more about their story at: www.accessibleemployers.ca/events/sap-labs-awarded-rick-hansen-foundations-accessibility-certified-gold-rating/