

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law in July, 1990, with enforcement of the law beginning in July, 1991. The intent of the law is to broadly protect the civil rights of the disabled; prohibiting discrimination in employment and access to goods and services.

The ADA Contains Five Parts or Titles

Title I Employment

Ensures that qualified individuals with disabilities are protected from discrimination on the basis of disability.

Title II Public Services and Transportation

Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in all services, programs, and activities provided or made available by local or state governments and their affiliate agencies.

Title III Public Accommodations (Including Signage)

Specifies that no individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal access of public accommodations. All services and facilities, even those privately owned, must be accessible to persons with disabilities.

Title IV Telecommunications

Requires telephone companies to provide special services for the hearing and/or speech impaired.

Title V Miscellaneous

Contains supplemental regulations including legal and implementation details that are not explicitly covered in other parts of the ADA.

ADA Title III

Applies to Public Accommodations & Commercial Facilities

Public Accommodations

Public accommodations are defined as private establishments providing goods and services to the general public. Over five million facilities are affected including hotels, restaurants, hospitals, physicians' offices, schools, stores, movie theaters, convention centers, libraries, banks, museums and airports.

Commercial Facilities

Commercial facilities are defined as non-residential establishments not open to the general public that affect commerce, such as factories, warehouses and office buildings.

Exemptions

Private clubs and religious organizations, including places of worship.

Revised Final ADA Regulations

The Department of Justice published revised final regulations implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for title II and title III on September 15, 2010, in the Federal Register. These requirements, or rules, clarify and refine issues that have arisen over the past 20 years and contain new and updated requirements, including the 2010 Standards for Accessible Design ("2010 Standards").

2010 ADA Standards: Compliance Dates

On March 15, 2011, the updated ADA Accessibility Guidelines took effect in construction and alterations of facilities covered by the ADA, including places of public accommodation, commercial facilities, and state and local government facilities.

DOJ regulations allowed covered entities the choice of following either the updated standards or the original standards until March 15, 2012. After this period of time, use of the new standards is mandatory. In setting the effective dates, DOJ sought to allow sufficient time for transitions to the updated standards so as not to disrupt design and construction projects already underway.

Compliance Dates Continued

Airports, train stations and bus depots covered by the Department of Transportation and Federal Property covered by the General Services Administration or the Department of Defense have already adopted the updated standards and have been following them for several years.

If elements in existing facilities already comply with corresponding elements in the 1991 Standards and are not being altered, then entities are not required to make changes to those elements to bring them into compliance with the 2010 Standards until completing any planned alterations.

Please note that formal compliance is administered at the state and local levels, and that many states and municipalities have already adopted the new standards. Some states and municipalities are permitted to adopt accessibility codes that are even more stringent than the 2010 Standards, as long as they minimally meet the 2010 Standards and obtain approval from the U.S. Department of Justice.

Signs Designating Permanent Rooms and Spaces

The highest standards, including the use of tactile and Braille lettering, apply to signs that provide designations, labels, or names for interior rooms or spaces where the sign is not likely to change over time. Examples include interior signs labeling restrooms, room and floor numbers or letters, room names, stairs and exits.

Directional and Informational Signs

Wall mounted signs which provide direction to or information about functional spaces are not required to have tactile and Braille lettering. However, they must meet requirements for character proportion, minimum character height, sign finish and contrast.

Overhead Signs

Signs which are projected or suspended overhead must meet requirements for clearance, character proportion, minimum character height, sign finish and contrast.

Signs Exempt from ADA Standards

Building directories, menus, seat and row designations in assembly areas, occupant names, building addresses and company names and logos are not required to comply with ADA standards. In addition, temporary signs used for 7 days or less are not required to comply with ADA standards.

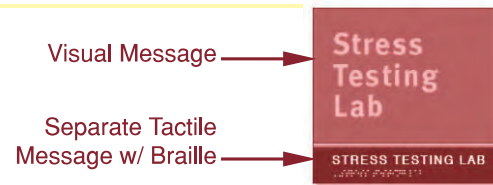
Final compliance is in the hands of your local inspector.

Summary of The 2010 Changes

Type Styles

New guidelines require tactile signs to use widely spaced block style characters with thin strokes. Research has shown these characters are the easiest for those with vision impairments to read by touch. The most effective sign systems will take advantage of the new provision to separate the tactile from the visual messages.

When separate visual characters with duplicate information are provided, the tactile characters can be smaller and much less obtrusive to the sighted reader.

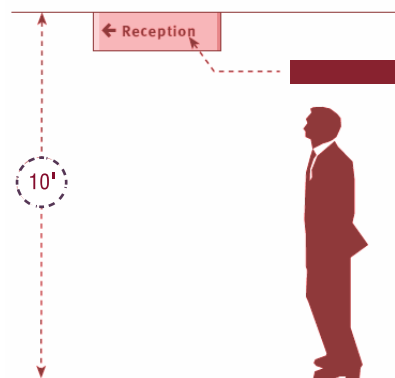


Most all typefaces commonly used for architectural signs are approved for use on visual signs

Letter Heights

The new guidelines include a chart with minimum character heights, based on viewing distance. For the majority of wall mounted signs, minimum letter height for visual characters is 5/8". For ceiling or projecting wall signs, minimum character height has been reduced from 3" to 2", provided you can approach within 15 feet of the sign.

When separate visual characters with duplicate information are provided, the tactile characters can be smaller and much less obtrusive to the sighted reader.

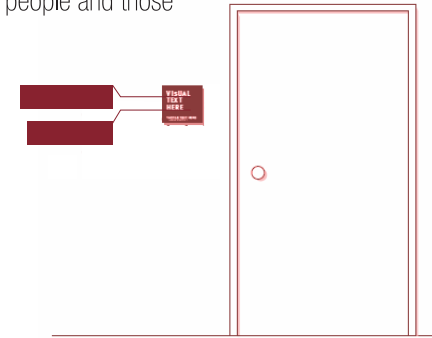


Summary of Changes Continued...

Mounting Positions

Tactile signs are to be mounted so the tactile's base line portion is between 48" and 60" inches above the floor. This lowering of the signs is in concert with other changes to make reach accommodations for shorter people and those in wheelchairs.

Signs on doors with closers that remain closed will now be allowed to be door mounted.



The new Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), published July 23, 2004 and the 1998 and 2003 editions of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard include these changes. While the new ADAAG will not be enforceable until March 15, 2012, some State governments have already incorporated language from ANSI 98 or 03 in their building codes. See the Access Board's website for more information on state accessibility codes: www.access-board.gov/links/statecodes.htm.

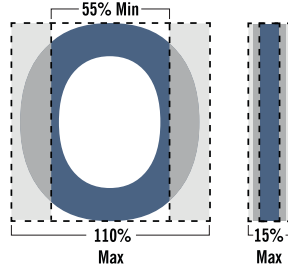
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Rules for Acceptable Tactile Fonts

Copy must be all upper case and raised at least 1/32". Tactile characters must be sans serif and may not be italic, not oblique, script or highly decorative.

Character Proportions

The stroke width of the upper case "I" has to be 15% of the letter height or less. The character width of the uppercase "O" must be between 55% and 110% of the height of the corresponding uppercase "I".



Copy Height for Tactile Information

Limited to be between 5/8" and 2".

(If separate visual characters are provided raised characters can be 1/2" and need not contrast with background).

Braille

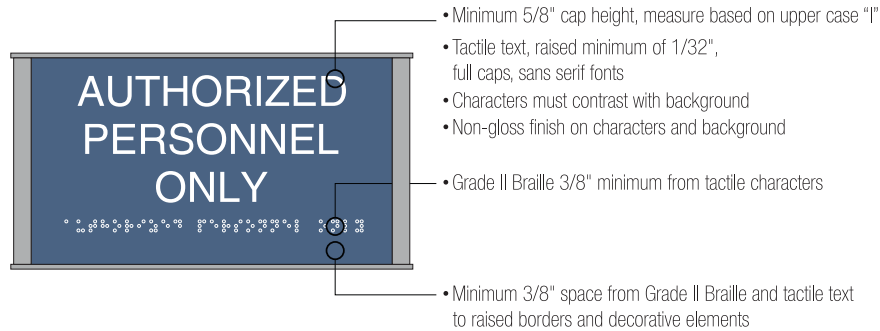
Must be Grade II with contractions. Braille is to be placed directly below the corresponding raised characters. If text is multi-lined, braille is placed below entire text and separated 3/8" from any other tactile characters and 3/8" minimum from raised borders and decorative elements. The shape of braille characters must always be rounded. Almost always lower case. Uppercase is only used before the first word of sentences, proper nouns and names, individual letters of the alphabet, initials and acronyms.

Minimum Sign Requirements

	Permanent	Directional	Overhead
Tactile Characters			
• Must be raised 1/32 inch minimum above their background	●		
• Must be all uppercase and sans serif	●		
• Must have a width-to-height ratio	●		
• Character height must be 5/8 inch minimum and 2 inches maximum based on the height of the uppercase letter "I"	●		
• Must be accompanied by Grade 2 Braille	●		
• Stroke thickness of the uppercase letter "I" must be 15 percent maximum of the height of the character	●		
Braille			
• Must be contracted (Grade 2) Braille	●		
• Braille dots must have a domed or rounded shape	●		
• Must be positioned below the corresponding text	●		
• Braille must be separated 3/8 inch minimum from any other tactile characters and from raised borders and decorative elements	●		
Visual Characters			
• May be uppercase, lowercase, or a combination of both		●	●
• May be serif, simple serif or sans serif, but must not be italic, oblique, script, or highly decorative		●	●
• Must have a width-to-height ratio		●	●
• Stroke thickness of the uppercase letter "I" must be 10 percent minimum and 30 percent maximum of the height of the character		●	●
Pictograms			
• Must have a field height of 6 inches minimum	●		
• Text descriptors must be placed below (not within) the pictogram field	●		
• Text descriptors must be tactile and Braille	●		
Finish & Contrast			
• Characters and their background must have a non-glare finish	●	●	●
• Characters must contrast with their background	●	●	●

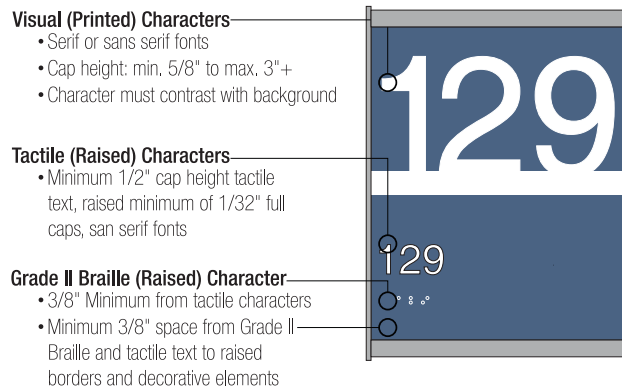
Final compliance is in the hands of your local inspector.

Typical ADA Compliant Sign



ADA Compliant Sign (Design Alternate)

This is an abbreviated list of Visual Characters and Decorative Copy Styles. When raised characters are not mandated but signs provide direction or life safety, guidelines for Visual Characters are required. Visual Characters cannot be expanded, extended, italic, oblique, script, highly decorative, or of other unusual forms. Decorative Copy Styles are available for non-ADA signage.



Copy Styles Chart (ADA Compliant)

This is an abbreviated list of ADA Compliant Copy Styles that comply with 2012 Standards for enhanced readability of tactile signage elements.

Avant Garde MdBt

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMmNnOo
PpQqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz 0123456789

Arial

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMmNnOo
PpQqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz 0123456789

Folio Lt BT

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMmNnOo
PpQqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz 0123456789

Frutiger 55 Roman

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMmNnOo
PpQqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz 0123456789

Futura Bk BT

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMmNnOo
PpQqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz 0123456789

Gill Sans MT

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMmNnOo
PpQqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz 0123456789

Helvetica Regular

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMmNnOo
PpQqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz 0123456789

Meta Medium LF-Roman

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMmNnOo
PpQqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz 0123456789

Myriad Pro

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMmNnOo
PpQqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz 0123456789

Swis 721 BT

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMmNnOo
PpQqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz 0123456789

Univers

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMmNnOo
PpQqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz 0123456789

Verdana

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJjKkLlMmNnOo
PpQqRrSsTtUuVvWwXxYyZz 0123456789

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Rules for Visually Read Information

The following information applies to all information that is to be read visually; it also applies to dual purpose raised graphics.

Acceptable Characters

Visual characters can not be italic or oblique, script or highly decorative.

Finish and Contrast

Characters or symbols and their background are to have a non-glare finish. The color of raised characters must contrast as much as possible with their background to make signs more legible for persons with low vision. Characters must be light on dark or dark on light. 70% contrast is a good rule of thumb.

Pictograms

Pictograms are to be located within a 6" vertical void. No characters or braille can be located within this field. Text descriptors are to be located directly below the pictogram.



Use standard International symbols, not "zoomy" symbols




International symbol of Accessibility




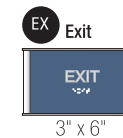
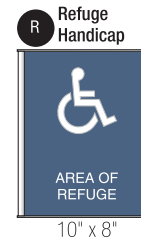
Identification of Accessible Facilities & Features

Restrooms and Bathing Facilities

 The International Symbol of Accessibility must be displayed at accessible restrooms and bathing facilities if all restrooms and bathing facilities are not accessible. Directional signs must be provided at the inaccessible locations, and these signs must include the International Symbol of Accessibility and follow visual character guidelines.

Means of Egress

 "Means of Egress" refers to the ability to exit a structure, and is broken into three parts: the path of travel to an exit, the exit itself, and the areas of refuge. Exit doors require signs that comply with tactile and visual character requirements, while area of refuge and directional signs must comply with visual character requirements.



Final compliance is in the hands of your local inspector.

Copy Size vs. Horizontal Viewing Distance

Visual characters shall be 40" minimum above the finish floor or ground.

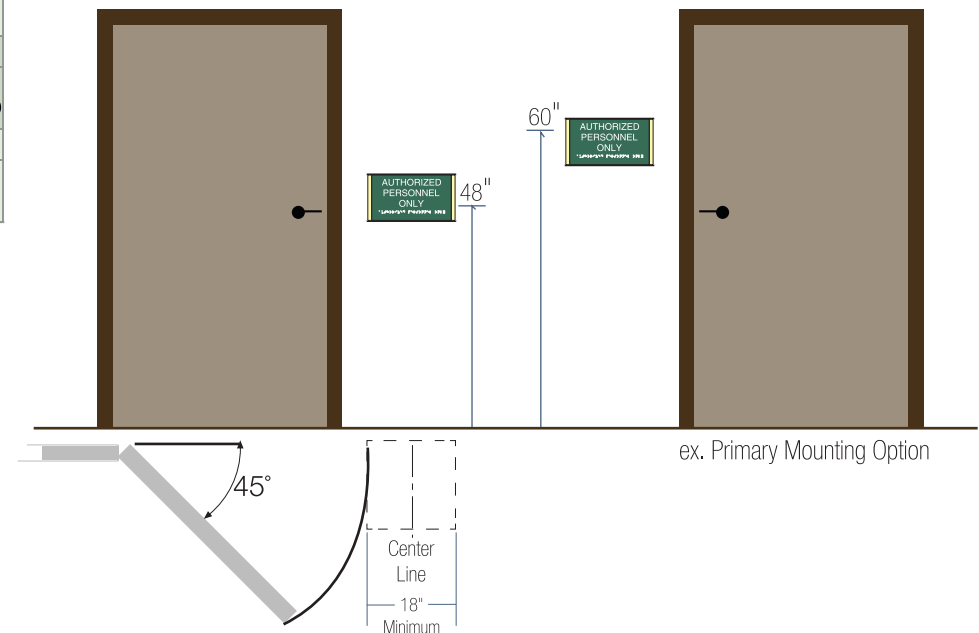
Visual Character Height Table

Height to Finish Floor or Ground from Baseline of Character	Horizontal Viewing Distance	Minimum Visual Character Height (Based on Uppercase "I")
40 inches (1015 mm) to less than or equal to 70 inches (1780 mm)	Less than 72 inches (6 feet) (1830 mm)	5/8 inch (16 mm)
	72 inches (6 feet) (1830 mm) and Greater	5/8 inch (16 mm), plus 1/8 inch (3.2 mm) per foot (305 mm) of viewing distance above 72 inches (6 feet) (1830 mm)
Greater than 70 inches (1780 mm) to less than or equal to 120 inches (3050 mm)	Less than 180 inches (15 feet) (4570 mm)	2 inches (51 mm)
	180 inches (15 feet) (4570 mm) and Greater	2 inches (51 mm), plus 1/8 inch (3.2 mm) per foot (305 mm) of viewing distance above 180 inches (15 feet) (4570 mm)
Greater than 120 inches (3050 mm)	Less than 252 inches (21 feet) (6400 mm)	3 inches (75 mm)
	252 inches (21 feet) (6400 mm) and Greater	3 inches (75 mm), plus 1/8 inch (3.2 mm) per foot (305 mm) viewing distance above 252 inches (21 feet) (6400 mm)

Location of Permanent Room ID Sign

Permanent room signs are to be located at doorways:

- 1) This gives the visually impaired a location cue.
- 2) Signs mount on the strike side of the door (**Primary Mounting Option**)
- 3) **Minimum Height:** Baseline of lowest tactile copy, mounted no lower than 48" above floor
- 4) **Maximum Height:** Baseline of highest tactile copy, mounted no higher than 60" above floor



- 3) If the door opens outward:

To protect the tactile reader from an outward swinging door, the sign needs to be mounted outside of the arc of the door swing.

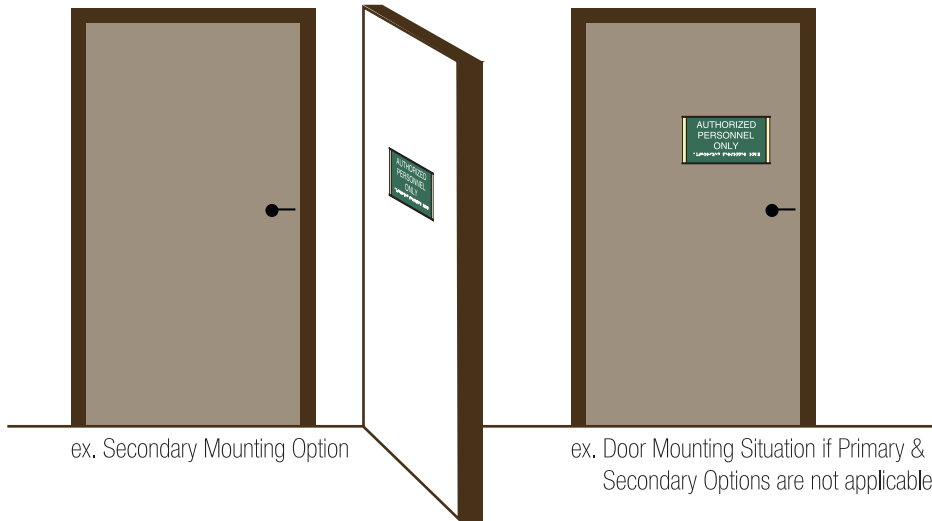
The raised characters on a permanent room ID are to be centered within an 18" square clear floor space.

Final compliance is in the hands of your local inspector.

Location of Permanent Room ID Sign Continued

(Secondary Mounting Option):

- 1) If there is no room for the sign on the strike side of the door, then it can be placed on the nearest adjacent wall.
- 2) **Minimum Height:** Baseline of lowest tactile copy, mounted no lower than 48" above floor
- 3) **Maximum Height:** Baseline of highest tactile copy, mounted no higher than 60" above floor



(Door Mounting Option):

- 1) If the sign is mounted on the push side of the door (that swings inward)
- 2) If the door automatically closes
- 3) If the door has no hold open devices (Restrooms, Hotel Rooms & Fire Exits)
- 4) **Minimum Height:** Baseline of lowest tactile copy, mounted no lower than 48" above floor
- 5) **Maximum Height:** Baseline of highest tactile copy, mounted no higher than 60" above floor

Location of Permanent Room ID Sign Continued

Double doors:

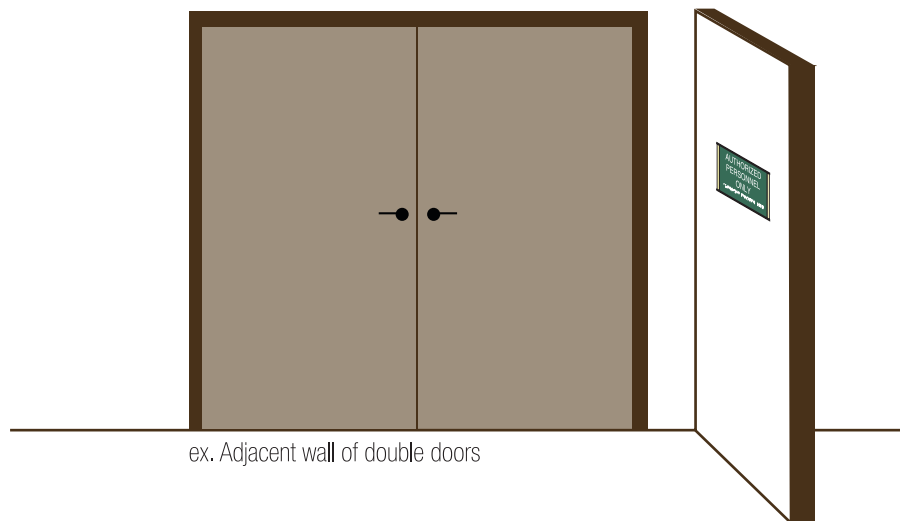
- 1) If only one door opens, the sign should be mounted to inactive door.
- 2) If both doors open, then the sign will mount to the right of the right hand door.
- 3) **Minimum Height:** Baseline of lowest tactile copy, mounted no lower than 48" above floor
- 4) **Maximum Height:** Baseline of highest tactile copy, mounted no higher than 60" above floor



Location of Permanent Room ID Sign Continued

Double doors:

- 1) If there is no room for the sign on the right side of the door, then it can be placed on the nearest adjacent wall.
- 2) **Minimum Height:** Baseline of lowest tactile copy, mounted no lower than 48" above floor
- 3) **Maximum Height:** Baseline of highest tactile copy, mounted no higher than 60" above floor



Frequently Asked Questions

Do all signs need to be ADA compliant?

No. Several signs are exempt from ADA codes including building addresses, building directories, company names and logos, menus, occupant names, seat and row designations in assembly areas, signs in parking facilities (except accessible parking space signs), signs not located in public use areas in detention and correctional facilities, and temporary signs which are used for seven days or less. Learn more at www.ADA.gov.

What sign types need to follow ADA guidelines?

All permanent rooms and spaces are required to have an ADA compliant sign providing identification. Life safety signs identifying doors at exit passage ways, exit discharge and stairwells are required to be ADA compliant and include raised characters and Braille copy. Overhead, flag-mounted and wall-mounted signs that direct or identify need to follow ADA guidelines but do not require tactile copy.

Does ADA require a name or a number to identify a space?

Rooms that contain equipment that cannot easily be moved, like kitchens and restrooms, are identified by name. For spaces that may change, like offices or cubicles, alphanumeric addresses are acceptable.

Does Cubicle signage need to be ADA compliant?

If cubicle furniture is not bolted to the floor, ceiling or any other part of the architecture, then it is a movable piece of furniture and not covered by the Standard. If the cubicle is not fixed then the sign attached to the cubicle is not permanent and therefore would not need to comply with the Standard. However, Howard Industries recommends compliance as if the sign were fixed as you have an obligation to provide effective communication and possibly reasonable accommodations for employees under the regulations. If cubicle furniture is affixed to the structure, alphanumeric addresses are acceptable; only the number must be ADA compliant not the changing name.

Frequently Asked Questions Continued

Do I have to update my current signage?

If signage in existing facilities already complies with the 1991 ADA, and is not being altered, you are not required to update it with changes in the 2010 Standards.

If you need to purchase a new sign; do you have to follow the new regulations?

Yes. If altering existing signage (i.e. ordering new sign or replacement parts), new regulations are required to remain ADA compliant.

Are there any ADA changes for symbol signage?

Yes. Pictograms need a vertical field of 6 inches. Raised characters and Braille cannot be located in this field. The equivalent verbal description needs to be placed directly below the pictogram field.

Is Helvetica Medium (HMC) Copy Style ADA compliant?

No. Though once compliant and considered the industry standard ADA copy style, HMC is no longer compliant due to the thickness of the stroke. Howard Industries recommends using Helvetica Regular (HRC) for visual consistency.

Do I need evacuation maps in my facility?

Although codes vary state to state, it is highly recommended. Evacuation maps, when required, must include a floor plan with an evacuation route, location of safety items, outside meeting location, and emergency protocols. Evacuation maps do not require raised characters or Braille. Since local ordinances override federal, please verify with your municipality.

Is ADA stairwell signage necessary?

Yes. A tactile/Braille sign is required on the floor side leading into the stairwell that says EXIT (a stair number and graphic can be added but do not need to be tactile). A tactile/Braille sign is also required on the inside of the stairwell next to the door that says the floor number (it can read FLOOR 6 or just 6). At the point of exit discharge from the building there needs to be an EXIT sign next to that door in tactile/Braille. Also many local fire codes require a visual-compliant minimum sign size of 18 inches high by 12 inches wide for each floor in all stairwells identifying floor level, stair level, roof access, and level of exit. Depending on building type and state code, these signs may be required to be photoluminescent. Since local ordinances override federal, please verify with your municipality.