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Why and Where Do I need ADA Signs

Posted by [Tamie Balderrama](#) on Jan 7, 2015 1:13:00 PM

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Why and Where Do I need ADA Signs

Most people know or have noticed that there are Braille signs in most of the public places that they have been. Have you ever wondered why? Did you know that Braille signs are a

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part of the Americans With Disability Act, and governed by the Department of Justice? Is your business compliant? If not, you could be subject to a lawsuit and ordered to pay hefty fines.

Erie Custom Signs manufactures signs for virtually every state in the country. In our discussions, we are going to talk about the ADA sign requirements from the Department of Justice. Each state may have its own requirements, which may enhance the requirements from the DOJ, but they will never be less restrictive. It is impossible for us to know the requirements for each state, and you are encouraged to learn what your state and local requirements are beyond what is identified here.

The 2010 Standards for Accessible Design from the Department of Justice state that all interior and exterior signs, in places of public accommodation, including commercial facilities and state and local government facilities, shall comply with the signage requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

What that means, and as always with government documents there are exceptions to many of the requirements, is that Braille signs are required for visually impaired and sightless persons in the above listed buildings. These rules have been mandatory since March 15, 2012, for all newly constructed buildings and those undergoing renovations or alterations.

What rooms do I have to put [ADA signs](#) on? I hear that question most frequently. Below is the requirement for what must have ADA signage:

216.2 Designations. Interior and exterior signs identifying permanent rooms and spaces shall comply with 703.1,

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703.2, and 703.5.

Advisory 216.2 Designations. Section 216.2 applies 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, and room names. Tactile text descriptors are required for pictograms that are provided to label or identify a permanent room or space. Pictograms that provide information about a room or space, such as “no smoking,” occupant logos, and the International Symbol of Accessibility, are not required to have text descriptors.



Let's break it down so we may attempt to properly interpret the requirement. "Permanent rooms and spaces" would indicate that every room and *space* within a building, as defined in the first paragraph, would need an ADA sign. An example of a space or room that is not permanent would be office cubicles. If it has a door, it needs a Braille sign. Even if it does not have a door, and it is a permanent *space*, it needs an ADA sign. That would include waiting rooms, lobbies, foyers, stairwells,

floor levels upon exiting an elevator, etc.

“If it has a door...” is my own interpretation, but it does include the storage rooms, janitor’s closets, restrooms, offices, electrical rooms, etc. The advisory is telling us that the sign does not have to name the room but it does require a label, and oftentimes a business will choose to give the room a number designation as opposed naming the room, and that is compliant. The advisory is further stating that if pictograms are used, the raised text must accompany the pictogram, except where the pictogram is “informational”, but it does not state that pictograms are required, even for the restrooms. Although they are not required, the purpose of the required signage is to assist persons, even fully sighted persons, in identifying rooms. Pictograms are a tool to that end and should be used wherever possible.

What about the **unit numbers in condominiums, apartment complexes, or student housing**? At first thought, these buildings do not fit the criteria above for those required to have Braille signs. However, if the facility is government funded or subsidized, Braille signs are most likely required.

As always, if the Braille sign requirement is in question, consult with your local or state inspector. They are a valuable resource on the requirement and will let you know what you need in order to receive your occupancy permit.

By the way, just adding Braille does not make a sign ADA compliant. There are many other requirements regarding the font, text size, spacing, etc. that must be met as well, and we will explore that at a later time.

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send us an email sales@eriecustomsigns.com or tamie@eriecustomsigns.com

and we will be happy to help by answering any questions, provide a free quote, or we can also help design your custom ADA signs with our two graphic designers on staff.

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Tamie Balderrama

January 20, 2015 at 7:06:07 AM PST

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