



Building Without Barriers

The Accessible Housing Design File by Barrier Free Environments Inc. (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1991; 800/842-3636). 210 pages. Softcover, 8 1/2 x 11. \$44.95.

Barrier Free Design: The Law (Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Assoc., 1991; 800/444-0120). 319 pages. Wire-bound softcover, 8 1/2 x 11. Free to design professionals.

by Paul Hanke

Access to information on how to design for the disabled has been difficult to come by in the past. The *Accessible Housing Design File*, with its clear presentation and numerous drawings, goes a long way toward remedying this situation. Its seven chapters progressively lead you through design issues from site planning and entries to bedrooms and egress requirements. Along the way you'll learn why "flared" sidewalk ramps are the preferred style, when standard 9x7 garage doors may not be high enough (many wheelchair users have modified vans), and why two-story houses are preferable to split-levels. There are also several sample kitchens, bathroom, and bedroom layouts.

Despite its many strengths, the *Design File* has several shortcomings. First, as the authors acknowledge, the primary focus is on mobility limitations, with only limited information on issues relating to blindness or hearing impairment. Second, all the illustrations are drawings, with no photos from the real world. Finally, there is no source list for products, so you're on your own when it comes to specifying or purchasing specialized products for particular applications.

Help From the Vets

The Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association (EPVA) offers two publications that make up for these deficiencies. Both publications provide truly comprehensive

information on relevant federal (and some state) laws, regulations, and design guidelines.

Now in its fifth edition, *Barrier Free Design: The Law* is divided into three sections. The first section covers federal agency rules, including an excerpt from the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In many cases, the legalistic text is followed by a brief explanation in plain English. All of this is accompanied by pages of exceptionally well-illustrated design standards for various occupancy classifications, such as dwellings, restaurants, and health care facilities. Virtually any question you might have about ramps, historic preservation, wheelchair clearances, storage, tactile warnings, and many other topics, is graphically answered here. An appendix offers supplemental information to assist you in understanding the minimum requirements of the law.

The last two sections of *Barrier Free Design* provide information on the applicable regulations of New York State and New York City. Similar volumes are available for Connecticut, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. All of the new editions update the state standards and ADA information, and describe the tax credits available to businesses to help them comply with the ADA.

The EPVA also publishes *Removing Barriers in Places of Public Accommodation*, a 27-page pamphlet that uses real-life photos to outline

the requirements of the ADA. It explains compliance priorities for building entries, accessing goods and services once inside, restroom facilities, parking, and other issues. It also discusses the available \$5,000 tax credit and \$15,000 tax deduction for expenditures relating to compliance.

Both of these publications are excellent sources for architects, designers, and engineers who deal with barrier-free design. Although the vets make their publications available free of charge, they do accept donations for their work, and I'd say a generous one would be in order.

More Books on ADA

The passage of ADA has spawned the publication of more titles on the subject than we have space to review. Other books that have come to our attention include the following:

- *Understanding the Americans with Disabilities Act and The ADA: Access State and Local Government* (EPVA, free; 800/444-0120)
- *Fair Housing Design Guide for Accessibility* (jointly sponsored by NAHB and five other organizations, \$37.50; 800/368-5242)
- *The New ADA: Compliance and Costs* by Deborah Kearney (R. S. Means, \$69.95; 800/334-3509). ■

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