

## ARCHITECTURAL ACCESSIBILITY IN TEXAS



### FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY LAWS & STANDARDS

#### The Texas Accessibility Standards (TAS)

ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS  
Texas Civil Statutes, Article 9102  
**ACCESSIBLE PARKING**

#### TAS 4.6 Parking and Passenger Loading Zones

Accessible parking and passenger loading zones require aisles alongside parking and pull-up spaces so that persons using mobility aids can transfer and maneuver to and from vehicles. Wider aisles are necessary to accommodate vans equipped with lifts, which are often mounted on the side but sometimes the back. Accessibility also includes the appropriate designation and location of spaces and passenger loading zones, their connection to an accessible route, and vertical circulation for vans.

#### TAS 4.3.2(5) Vehicle Hazards

Accessible routes must be located so that users **are not required to wheel or walk behind parked vehicles** (except the one they operate or in which they are a passenger) or **in traffic lanes**.

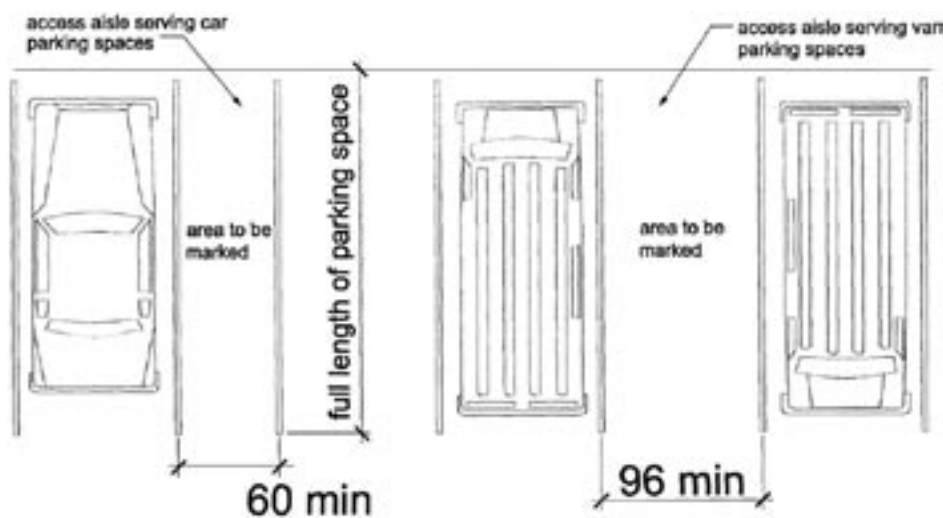
#### TAS 4.6.2 Accessible Parking Locations

Accessible parking spaces serving a particular building **must be located on the shortest accessible route of travel from adjacent parking to an accessible entrance**. In buildings with multiple accessible entrances with adjacent parking, accessible parking spaces must be dispersed and located closest to the accessible entrances.

#### TAS 4.6.3 "Van Accessible" Parking Spaces

The increasing use of vans with side-mounted lifts or ramps by persons with disabilities has necessitated some revisions in specifications for parking spaces and adjacent access aisles. The typical accessible parking space is 96" wide with an adjacent 60" access aisle. However, this aisle does not permit lifts or ramps to be deployed and still leave room for a person using a wheelchair or other mobility aid to exit the lift platform or ramp.

n tests conducted with actual lift/van/wheelchair combinations, (under a U.S. Access Board- sponsored accessible parking project) researchers found that a space and aisle totaling almost 204" wide was needed to deploy a lift and exit conveniently. The "van accessible" parking space required by the TAS provides a 96" wide space with a 96" wide adjacent access aisle which is just wide enough to maneuver and exit from a side mounted lift. If a 96" wide access aisle is placed between two spaces, two "van accessible" spaces are created. TAS requires that one in every eight accessible spaces, but not less than one, must be "van accessible". **Vehicle parking spaces and access aisles must be level with surface slopes not exceeding 1:50 (2%) in all directions.**



The method and color of marking an access aisle is not specified in TAS. However, since van access aisles are required to be as wide as the accessible parking space, it is important that they be clearly marked. Bollards or other barriers can help prevent misuse of the aisle provided that they do not obstruct the access aisle or required connecting accessible route. If used, bollards must be placed at the boundary of the access aisle so they do not prevent the deployment of wheelchair lifts or the use of mobility aids.

#### TAS 4.6.4 Signage

Signs designating parking places for persons with disabilities can be seen from a driver's seat if the signs are mounted high enough above the paving and located at the front of an accessible parking space. TAS 4.6.4(1) requires characters and symbols on accessible parking signage to be located **60" minimum above the ground, floor, or paving surface** so they cannot be obscured by a vehicle parked in the space.

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## UA Local 142 is 100+ and classes are maxed

**E**stablished before the turn of the last century, **UA Local 142 San Antonio Area Plumbers and Pipefitters Apprenticeship and Training Committee** is over 100 years old.

San Antonio Construction News spoke with training coordinator **Eddie Moran**, who spearheads the five-year apprenticeship training program. His relationship with Local 142 dates back to 1968, when he was a young apprentice.

"I think of myself as the principal of the school," he began. "We hire instructors from within our own ranks to teach different phases of the industry, to include plumbing, pipefitting, and HVAC service. We expose our apprentices to what they'll need to know when they become journeymen. Some basic plumbing and pipefitting coursework overlaps, then they branch out to address trade-specific material. The HVAC service side has its own specialized curriculum."

Journeyman plumbers, whose area of expertise includes potable water systems, waste water systems, medical gases, and backflow prevention, are required to take a state licensing exam. Journeyman pipefitters, whose work focuses on commercial air conditioning, chilled and hot water systems, currently take an exit exam to become journeymen. Reportedly, there is discussion underway to license pipefitters in the future.

"Our apprenticeship training program can accommodate about 100 students each year," Eddie added. "Each apprentice is employed full time and attends school two nights a week. Our students range in age from 18 to 56, but the average student is in his mid-20's to early 30's. Our school is funded by the state through Northside ISD, and we follow their school calendar. The school also receives hourly contributions from each contractor-member of the Local."

To qualify for graduation in five

years, a plumbing apprentice must: have 10,000 hours of on-the-job-training; 1,080 hours of classroom education; pass an exit exam; and pass a state licensing exam. To become a journeyman, the pipefitting apprentices must have 10,000 hours on-the-job-training; 1,080 hours classroom education; and pass an exit exam. The HVAC service apprentice must: have 10,000 hours of on-the-job-training; 1,230 hours of classroom education; and pass an exit exam.

"UA Local 142 is also one of the providers of continuing education for plumbers," Eddie continued. "We schedule one Saturday each month to review new codes or code changes, discuss state laws, new products, and conclude the day with a test. We then issue a certificate to the journeymen which results in an endorsement on their license."

Eddie emphasized how important it is to keep pace with the rapidly-advancing technologies that affect each trade.

"First and foremost, the instructors face a continuous learning curve because of high-tech instrumentation, direct digital controls, computers and diversity in materials. While the younger people in our industries face the high-tech world with no fear, some of the older guys never dreamed they'd have to deal with computers when they got into the trades."

In Eddie's opinion, Local 142 turns out the best-educated plumbing, pipefitting and HVAC professionals in the state.

"I feel we do a really good job," he said, "and the apprentices who graduate to become journeymen have had the most thorough education and training available. When the local market goes through a lull, union journeymen can relocate to other cities across the country to find work in more active markets. That wouldn't be possible if the workforce wasn't up to the task!"

## Student volunteers greeted Parade-goers

**S**tudents from local colleges helped to pave the way to a successful 2003 Parade of Homes, sponsored in September by the **Greater San Antonio Builders Association**. Since this year's event was at dual sites, extra volunteers were needed to direct visitors in and around Sonoma Ranch and Tapatio Springs. Student volunteers, solicited by **Nikki Young of SurveySA**, a San Antonio-based surveying company, greeted the public and collected tickets upon entering the sites.

Students commented that they felt like the experience with San Antonio's industry professionals helped establish a career foundation. Not only were students

able to meet builders and other industry professionals while viewing the latest styles in home architecture and decorating, they were also able to pick up some "real life" helpful tips on gardening and landscaping, ways to conserve energy, custom art and more. The staff at SurveySA, surveyed two homes in the Parade.

"We think that education is the key to building better futures and are excited to see students participate in this year's Parade of Homes. We encourage area students to become involved in their profession as soon as possible," said **Keith Jimenez**, President of SurveySA. "They make better employees and business owners in the future."



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