

Kiosk Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act



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Signed into law by President George H. W. Bush on July 26, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is undeniably the most comprehensive formulation of disability rights in the history of the United States or of any other nation. And the reach is enormous: More than 50 million Americans have some kind of physical, sensory, cognitive or mental disability. At its core, the ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in the areas of employment, public services provided by state and local governments, public services operated by private entities, transportation and telecommunications.

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ADA regulations place into effect far-reaching provisions and definite laws for employment, state and local government, transportation, public accommodations and telecommunications. The regulations fall into three distinct categories:

- Title I addresses employment and prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities.
- Title II addresses access to programs, activities and services of public entities and prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities.
- Title III addresses public accommodations by private business and prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

The US Architectural & Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, also known as the ATBCB or "Access Board," oversees the Americans with Disabilities Act and related matters such as compliance, clarification and guidance.

ADA AND KIOSKS

ADA-accessibility guidelines specifically mention ATMs, but not kiosks. This begs the question whether ADA and accessibility guidelines apply to kiosks and information transaction machines, also known as ITMs, as they do to ATMs. The conclusion from the Accessibility Board holds that interactive kiosks are covered under ADA, and that the

POINTS TO CONSIDER

To determine if ADA regulations apply to your self-service project, ask the following:

- 1. Will the kiosk be used in a public environment?**
- 2. Will the kiosk be used internally, strictly by employees?**
- 3. Will the kiosk be operated by a federal, state, city or other government organization?**
- 4. Does the kiosk or any portion of the project receive federal funding?**

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, ADA regulations apply.

ATM-accessibility guidelines are the best relevant guidance available.

So how do these guidelines apply to kiosks? ADA laws are meant to ensure the kiosk owner will provide equal access for persons with disabilities. This means hearing- and visually-impaired individuals and persons with physical disabilities must have access in the same manner as an individual with no physical disability. In a self-service kiosk application, this applies not only to kiosk accessibility, but also to the touchscreen and other peripherals, such as a keyboard, bill acceptor or printer.

KIOSK ACCESS

ADA law states there must be clear accessibility to the kiosk. In other words, enough room must be available for a person in a wheelchair to maneuver to the screen and gain access. The law requires at least 34 inches of clear space directly in front of the kiosk for persons in wheelchairs. If the kiosk requires side access, then there must be 34 inches of clear side access as well.

ACCESSING THE TOUCHSCREEN AND OTHER COMPONENTS

ADA provides ranges of maximum and minimum height for components with unobstructed and obstructed forward reach and unobstructed and obstructed side reach. "Unobstructed reach" applies to a kiosk system without a large, protruding extension that would prevent or hinder interaction with the component. "Obstructed reach" applies to a kiosk system that contains a large shelf or counter, or has a recessed monitor that would limit a user's access to the component.

Another tricky aspect of ADA regulations is the determination of maximum height for kiosk components. A shelf should range from 28 inches to a maximum of 32 inches from the floor. This can serve as a good benchmark for input components such as a keyboard, credit-card reader or PIN pad.

Additionally, individual components or functions may require guidance outside of simple access. For example, if the kiosk has a telephone handset, ADA specifies the type of handset and functional require-



This redbox kiosk meets current ADA regulations.

ments needed. Likewise, if the application has audio, ADA defines how to address individuals with a hearing impairment.

Lastly, signage elements for components and directions placed on the kiosk will require raised characters and other provisions listed in ADA Chapter 7.

CONCLUSION:

In summary, ADA applies to any kiosk project. The process of understanding ADA can be complicated, so it is important to conduct proper research to determine that your kiosk meets ADA law. Using the “if – then” process when thinking about ADA compliance is a good strategy. For example:

- If your kiosk features a touchscreen, then the maximum height of the monitor should not exceed 48 inches.
- If your kiosk features a touchscreen, then which specific type(s) of touch technologies comply with ADA?
- If your kiosk features a shelf, then the maximum height of the shelf should not exceed 32 inches.
- If your kiosk features a telephone handset, then the height needs to conform to ADA guidelines (Chapter 3, 308 Reach Ranges), and audio controls also must meet guidelines (Chapter 7, 704 Telephones).

The process of understanding ADA can be overwhelming, but with proper research and planning, compliance with ADA law can be accomplished.



Online Resources

1. ADA Home Page: <http://www.ada.gov/adahom1.htm>
2. Reach Ranges: <http://www.access-board.gov/ada-aba/final.htm#pgfld-1008283>
3. Accessibility Standards for Accessible Design: <http://www.ada.gov/stdspdf.htm>
4. Section 508, Federal Buying Standards: <http://www.section508.gov/>

ADA DEFINITIONS FOR FRONT- AND SIDE- REACH ACCESS

- **Front-reach unobstructed access:**
Minimum height of 15 inches, maximum height of 48 inches.
- **Front-reach obstructed access:**
Setback zero to 20 inches, maximum height of 48 inches. The law allows a setback of 25 inches, but the maximum height drops to 44 inches.
- **Side-reach unobstructed access:**
Maximum height of 48 inches.
- **Side-reach obstructed access:**
Setback zero to 10 inches, maximum height of 48 inches. If the setback is 10 to 24 inches, the maximum height drops to 44 inches.