Features of the Standard Barrier Survey / Barrier Management System

(for Public Entities Covered Under **Title II** of The ADA)

The Standard ADA Barrier Survey Approach

The Evan Terry Associates (ETA) Standard Barrier Survey has been designed to provide all of the facility-related information needed to comply with the ADA requirements in a manageable database. This survey process, developed and implemented under the field direction of ETA staff by trained surveyors, offers cost-effective suggestions for the removal of existing barriers and advice on when such removal is not required for program access or perhaps is technically infeasible.

When surveyors do not fully understand the ADA's requirements, they typically make two very expensive kinds of errors. First, they miss important barriers that may become risk-management headaches in the future (such as floor-surface barriers to people with mobility impairments and protruding objects that are safety hazards to visually impaired individuals). Second, they make overly conservative assumptions about what is required by the ADA that usually result in expensive corrections to nonproblems.

Since the original survey is performed and reviewed by ADA specialists using a carefully designed and field-tested process, erroneous assumptions about what the ADA actually requires will be minimal or nonexistent. The possible solutions are chosen from among thousands of ETA's standard solutions or developed in the field by ADA specialists who have architectural experience. That minimizes the chances that the report will include technically infeasible suggestions such as widening doors next to plumbing chases, moving structural walls to achieve "required" clearances at doors or fixtures, and similar suggestions commonly made by report writers sitting at a desk without full view of the site conditions. This quality of report will really be appreciated when your program-access barrier-removal work actually begins, particularly by those who must implement the work in the field.

Collecting the Data

Working with hard copy forms or a Tablet PC in the field, a trained surveyor identifies the barriers that limit program access. The surveyor then selects a standard solution or creates a new one that would meet the full requirements for physical barrier removal. When an alternative method or administrative solution is obvious to the surveyor, it is added to the database along with its probable cost. This gives you a cheaper solution that can be used until money is available for an alteration or full physical fix. The surveyor then verifies or calculates the probable cost of removal, and categorizes each barrier according to severity, how the element or area of the facility is used, and how it would be prioritized according to the simplified priorities in the regulations at Section 36.304. Photographs and surveyor's notes complete the analysis and documentation. When possible, the barriers are all located on a floor or site plan to make sure the contractor who does the work can efficiently locate the problem in the field.

The ADA Barrier Management System

The ADA Barrier Management System's reports facilitate your management of identified barriers, assist in setting priorities, allow tracking of barrier removal (to document that you are acting in good faith), automatically plan capital expenditures for barrier removal, and assist in making facility changes required by Title I in accommodating future employees.

Since the *eventual* costs of ADA compliance are typically measured in dollars per square foot, for large facilities one primary concern for a barrier management system is how to efficiently and effectively manage that expenditure. A well-designed barrier management system will simplify the removal of those readily achievable (for private entities in the facilities) and program access-blocking barriers (without going overboard) but will still remind the users and their architects of specific responsibilities during alterations projects.

This database can save compliance money in a number of other ways, too. The SBS produces a list of possible solutions that are sort-capable in the ADA Barrier Management System database. This means, for example, that you can prepare a date-sorted list of door-knob replacements to allow you to bargain for a better price on hardware based on the total number of units you will be purchasing over, say, the next five years. It allows you to allocate responsibilities according to your staff's capabilities, or even to justify keeping or hiring new full- or part-time staff just to tackle specific tasks like adjusting door closers and replacing hardware.

The database may be used to manage all of your ADA facility responsibilities, including barrier removal during future alteration projects. Various reports have been designed to meet the specific data needs of various individuals who will need access to barrier management information without including all of the information needed to manage the entire process. For example, in discussions with future architects who will be planning alterations and additions to the facilities, a standard "Barriers" report can be easily prepared for them listing both the existing barriers in the areas to be altered and those remaining barriers which must be removed along the path of travel. The report lists applicable section and figure numbers from the relevant standards for each barrier, indicates measured existing conditions, and gives possible solutions by ADA specialists to minimize planning errors. This report, however, does not include your funding source for the barrier removal or information about related work or barriers in nonpertinent areas.

Some barriers may be removed by your users (such as moving furniture or planters); others will require your maintenance staff or a general contractor. The database allows your facility manager to make overall and/or specific judgement calls about how to allocate those responsibilities. The database can then produce prioritized task lists for each responsible party following your capital budget. Another data field that is included in the database is the funding source. It may be used to plan which funds will be used for the removal of each barrier or each type of barrier. For example, certain barriers will probably be budgeted for removal under an ADA barrier removal fund. Others will be removed during future alterations as part of those

alterations funds. Still others may be eligible for outside funding. In nonprofit organizations, it may even be desirable to solicit donations for the removal of certain high-profile barriers. Use of this field in the database will simplify the capital planning process by using the automated sorting and mathematical capabilities of the database.

The system is designed to *automatically* set generic priorities based upon surveyed characteristics of each barrier and your particular concerns. It then allows you to modify those priorities based on specific circumstances or reset them in the future whenever needed. Task priorities are easily reset based on your current needs, and capital budget reports are automatically updated. When a request is made for the removal of a specific barrier, the entire system can be updated to reflect that request with truly minimal effort, whether the request comes a week after the reports are finished or five years later. Revised reports may be printed at any time.

ADA Barrier Management System Internet Access

One very powerful option ETA offers with the ADA Barrier Management System is the ability to view the database over the Internet. This database has a high level of security with password protection at the user and manager levels. It offers quick access to the barrier data as well as to the photographs and plans indicating the location of the barriers. Other information includes a summary of the survey process and how to read and interpret the data. With this system users can set schedules for barrier removal and assign responsibility for the completion of each task to a particular individual or group. Once the removal is completed, users can update the information to reflect the actual cost and time spent to remove each barrier and add "after" photographs showing the completed barrier removal. Users can easily update the database either over the Internet or by downloading data into Microsoft Access or Excel, or other software packages. The data is presented in a series of highly intuitive screens that even a database novice can easily understand and use. The database also allows the user to select from a series of standard reports and to filter the data to include or omit particular types of information. Barrier information is available in seconds and individually tailored output, from work orders to coordination reports, is as close as your local printer.

Summary

ETA's ADA Barrier Management System takes the large volume of detailed barrier information generated by ADA specialists in the field and manages it to allow you to actually **use** that data in all the ways the law requires. It is flexible enough to adopt your barrier-removal priorities and to accommodate the way you operate your capital planning and facilities management. The system is the result of years of development by ETA and is currently in use by both public and private entities. It is flexible, efficient, and proven in use at facilities all over the United States.

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