

## **Facilities for Physically Challenged**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Around 10% of the world's population or roughly 650 million people live with a disability. In India, more than 21 million people suffer from one kind of disability or the other, such as blindness, hearing or immobility, etc. This, according to the 2001 Census, accounts for almost 2.1% of the population. According to a research paper, two out of every thousand guests received at hotels are either physically challenged or suffer from speech, mobility, or visual impairment. The Union Ministry of Tourism, in 2009, made it mandatory for all star categories to add facilities for the physically challenged people in various categories.



IHM NOTES

### **Types of Physically Challenged Guests**

Depending on the various kinds of impairment either in body organs, such as limbs, hands, spinal cord, etc., or of sensory organs, such as eyes, ears, speech etc., people may suffer from various disabilities. As a result, our physically challenged guests, hereafter referred to as special guests, are categorized into the following types.

- Special guests with mobility difficulties
  - Special guests who are assisted on wheelchair
  - Special guests unassisted on wheelchair
- Special guests with deafness or hearing impairment
- Special guests with learning disabilities/mental impairments

### **GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING FACILITIES**

The physical needs of each of the above mentioned kinds of guests are different. However, with slight modifications in various areas of the hotels, not only can these properties be *rendered easily accessible to them*, but by integrating simple unobtrusive facilities in the design structures, the special guests can go about freely without hassling other guests.

#### Access for Guests with Mobility Difficulties

Most of the physical modifications to a hotel property are made to meet the needs of guests with mobility impairments, those who use wheelchairs, canes, or crutches.

**Public Entrance** The industry guidelines for the public entrance are as follows.

- A public entrance must be accessible to wheelchair use from setting down or car parking point.
- Where a hotel has a car park, a reserved parking space should be available for a disabled guest, on request.
- The path from parking point or space to the entrance must be sound in construction, and free obstacles. Deep gravel, cobbles, and pot-holed surfaces must be avoided.
- The entrance door must have a clear opening of not less than 67cm.
- Where there is no ramp, there must be not more than 3 steps to the entrance at any point.
- Within the reception area, there must be an unobstructed space of not less than 110 cm \* 70 cm.
- Steps to be used by a special guest should have risers, not more than 19 cm, with treads not less than 25 cm deep and 75 cm wide.

Interior (general)

- Public pathways that lead to the restaurant/dining room, lounge, TV lounge, (unless TV is provided in the bedroom), bar, the special guests bedroom and bathroom should be not less than 75 cm wide.
- Doors to the rooms referred to above should have a clear opening of not less than 67cm.
- There must be no more than 3 steps, at any point, in the corridors that guests with difficulties in mobility would be required to use, or at the entrance of the rooms referred to the above.
- Where the special guests may be required to use a lift, its door should have a clear opening of not less than 67 cm, and the interior of the lift should not be less than 110 cm deep by 70 cm wide.

#### Bathroom

- The bathroom must be *en suite* or on the same floor as the special guest's bedroom.
- Where a bath is provided, it should have horizontal or angled support rail on the far side.
- Where only shower is provided, it must have a seat (recommended 45-50 cm above floor) and a support rail on the far wall (recommended 25 cm above top of the seat and maximum of 50 cm from center of the seat).
- Where there is a step into the shower, it should have riser of not more than 19 cm.
- There must be washbasin within the bathroom/bedroom.

#### Water Closet (WC)

- The WC must be *en suite* or on the same floor as the special guest's bedroom.
- Toilet paper must be within the reach of the guest.
- Where the WC is separate from the bathroom there must be washbasin within the same room.

Guests who are assisted on the wheelchair

Public entrance

- The entrance door must have a clear opening of not less than 75 cm.
- Where there is no ramp there must be not more than one step to the entrance at any one point.

Interior general

- The public pass ways that led to the restaurant/dining room, lounge, TV lounge, (unless TV is provided in the bedroom), bar, the special guest's bedroom, and bathroom should not be less than 80 cm wide and not less than 120 cm on the opposite side if the doors to the rooms referred to above.
- Doors to the rooms referred to above should have a clear opening of not less than 75 cm.
- There must be no more than single steps, at any point, in the corridors that a guest on wheelchair will be required to use.
- Removable ramps, unless installed permanently, are not acceptable.
- Threshold to rooms to which the wheelchair user requires access must not be higher than 2 cm.
- Where the guest may be required to use a lift, the door should have a clear opening of not less than 75 cm and the interior of the lift should not be less than 110 cm deep by 80 cm wide.
- In the restaurant/ dining room there must be at least one accessible table with a clear under space at least 65 cm high. Blocks, to lift a table when required, are acceptable. Where three or more bedrooms meet such requirements, at least two such accessible tables should be provided.
- There can be a succession of single steps, provided there is sufficient space after each step for a wheelchair to sit comfortably and safely, with all four wheels on ground.

## Bedroom

- There must be unobstructed space not less than 110 cm \* 70 cm.
- There must be space alongside at least one side of the bed of not less than 80 cm to allow lateral transfer.
- At least one bedroom must be designed to such specifications for the mobility disadvantaged guests.

## Bathroom

- There must be unobstructed space not less than 110 \* 70 cm.
- Where a bath is provided, there must be a seat alongside of not less than 80 cm to allow lateral transfer.
- Where only shower is provided, it must have level entry, i.e., no rim; a lateral transfer space of not less than 80 cm and a seat.
- Only one bathroom, separate or *en suite* with the bedroom(s) must meet these requirements.
- The washbasin, either within the bathroom or bedroom, must have sufficient clear under space and/ or level taps to enable it to be used by someone in a wheelchair.

## Water closet

- There must be a lateral transfer space to the WC of not less than 80 cm.
- The rim of the WC seat must be between 45 and 50 cm above the floor.
- If separate from the bathroom, there must be unobstructed interior space of not less than 110 \* 70 cm<sup>2</sup> and a washbasin with clear under space.
- There must be a horizontal or angled support rail opposite the transfer space. It should be 20-30 cm above the seat.

## Unassisted guests on the wheelchair

## Public entrance

- If there is car park, there must be a level reserved space with a minimum width of 3.6 m.
- The route from parking point or space to the entrance must be levelled or ramped.
- The threshold at entrance must be not higher than 2 cm.

#### Interior general

- All paths to be used by the special guests must be levelled or ramped.
- Where the guest is required to use a lift, it must have automatic doors and the controls must be 140 cm or less in height from the floor.
- Access to the restaurant/dining room, lounge, bar , bedroom, bathroom, and WC (where not *en suite*) must be levelled or ramped with threshold not higher than 2 cm.

#### Bedroom

- The surface of the bed must be between 45 and 54 cm from the floor.
- Door handles, light switches, TV controls, curtain pulls, wardrobe rails etc. should be accessible and not more than 140 cm from the floor.
- At least one bedroom needs to meet these requirements.
- Lights switches and telephone (where provided) should not be more than 50 cm from the bed.

#### Bathroom

- The door handle and light switch must be 140 cm or less from the floor.
- The horizontal or angled support rail at the far side of the bath must be no more than 30 cm above the rim.
- The rim of the bath must be from 45-50 cm from the floor.
- Where only a shower is available for the guest, the controls must be 140 cm or less from the floor.
- Only one bathroom, separate or *en suite* with the bedroom(s) must meet these requirements.

### Water closet

- The horizontal support rail on the opposite side of the transfer space must be not more than 50 cm from the center of the seat.
- Only one WC, separate or *en suite* with the bedroom(s) above, should meet this requirement.

### Kitchens (self-catering units only)

The following guidelines may be adhered to by self-catering units

- There must be a minimum clear floor space of 120 cm front of units and work surfaces.
- At least one work surface or table should have a clear under space between 65 and 80 cm height.
- The oven should have front controls and base between 65 cm and 80 cm above the floors.
- The hob (cooking appliance with burners) should not be more than 80 cm high. It should have clear under space below or alongside and accessible controls.
- The base of the wall cupboards and shelves should not be more than 120 cm above the floor.
- The sinks should have lever taps and a clear under space.
- Light switches and door handles should not be more than 140 cm above the floor level.

### Creating Services for Guests with Other Disabilities

Some guests may have disabilities that are easily visible like a person using a wheelchair/crutches. Other disabilities such as a impairments of various sensory organs may not be as obvious: deafness, blindness, speech impairment, mental retardation, or a learning disability.

Visually impaired guests A sizeable number of travelers today are visually impaired. Certain areas of hotel property may be required by law to display instructions and signs in Braille for the convenience of the visually challenged persons. Buttons of elevators, directions to restrooms, other public areas such as restaurants, lobbies, bars, etc. are areas where such special guests would welcome Braille.

Braille menus in restaurants, room service menus, and Braille guests service directories in rooms are appreciated a lot by guests who can see.

Some useful tips in this regard are as follows.

- When talking to such guests, employees should introduce themselves and also identify any other person with them.
- Many visually impaired guests prefer to pay for hotel services with cash. When handing out change, lay the bills flat on the guest's palms and identify the denomination of each bill as you give it to them. Count out coins separately.
- Explain where emergency exits are located relative to the guest's room and note the numbers to dial on the telephone to reach the front desk and other services.
- It would be advisable to give the guest a room with easy access to the grounds on the property for them to walk their dogs when needed.

Deafness or hearing impairment Just as not every blind guest can read Braille, not every deaf or hearing impaired guest can read lips or communicate in sign language. Staff communication with the hearing impaired guests may keep the following points in mind.

- Let the guest determine the communication method with which he/she is comfortable: whether that is reading the lips or communicate as an interpreter.

- If there is an employee or staff member who knows sign language, they may be deputed for communication with such guests.
- Talk directly to the guest, even if he or she has an interpreter. Realize that people who read lips also rely on body language and facial expressions to convey meaning; don't exaggerate or underplay your expressions.

Room facilities for the hearing impaired A hotel should have one or more guest rooms specially equipped for the hearing impaired guests. These rooms should include the following.

- a telephone with a flashing light to indicate an incoming call
- a television decoder for reading closed captions or programs.
- a smoke alarm with a flashing light.
- a knock light for the door; and a vibrating alarm clock.

Guest who are mute or have speech impairment Guests with a speech impairment (who either do not speak at all or whose speech is difficult to understand) may not require special equipment, but they do not need understanding and patience from all hotel staff. If you can't understand them, offer them a pen and paper to communicate in writing.

Learning disabilities or mental impairments Some guests may have learning disabilities or mental impairment. While such guests may not require special infrastructural designing to cope with, they do require courteousness and patience on the part of their hosts to understand them. The staff can bear the following points in mind while communicating with them.

- Be patient and take your time explaining the information to them.
- Ask the guest if they understand or agree.
- Offer to read written material, if necessary.

Other afflictions Other indiscernible or hidden impairments could include heart conditions, emphysema or asthma, cancer or other terminally ill conditions.

The best rule to follow with such guests is to remember that a person is a guest first, and a guest with a disability afterwards. A helpful, courteous attitude is one of the most appreciated services; a physically challenged guest can receive from you.

#### INDIAN GOVERNMENT RULES FOR THE PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED GUESTS

In 2009, the Union Ministry of Tourism made mandatory for all star categories property to incorporate the following infrastructure/services for all disabled guests by September 2010.

1. Easy access for the differently abled guests.
2. At least one room for the differently abled guest. Minimum door width should be 1 m to allow wheelchair access.
3. Room to have audible and visible (blinking light) alarm system.
4. Free accessibility in all public areas and at least one restaurant in 5 star and 5 star deluxe properties.
5. Public restrooms to be unisex. Minimum door width must be 1 m and mandatory to all star hotels.
6. Ramps with anti-slip

The Ministry also developed a new format of assessment of category of all star hotels in the month of August 2009. Five marks are allotted for facilities to be offered to physically challenged persons in the star category system.

Distribution of marks for various facilities is as follows:

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|--|---------|
| 1. At least a room for physically challenged persons | 1 mark. |
| 2. Public toilet in lobby                            | 1 mark. |
| 3. Telephone in public places                        | 1 mark. |
| 4. Ramps, etc.                                       | 1 mark. |
| 5. Facilities for aurally and visually handicapped   | 1 mark. |

