

## **AAADM Public Policy Statement on Accessibility**

### **Background**

Stopping for that morning cup of coffee or tea, running in to vote before work, going out to dinner with friends – these are everyday occurrences that many take for granted. But for a significant number of people, these simple pleasures pose a challenge. People in wheelchairs, elderly folks with diminished upper body strength, moms and dads with little ones in strollers, and those temporarily disabled for any number of reasons, struggle daily to open doors to everyday life experiences. For many, the inability to easily open a door to any number of venues – restaurants, polling places, or shopping malls – can be difficult, intimidating, or even embarrassing. Such barriers limit freedom of choice as many of the disabled or elderly will simply avoid going places that are difficult to enter.

### **History of the Americans with Disabilities Act**

In 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law to address the needs of the disabled population. A comprehensive civil rights law, the ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, protecting the rights of disabled individuals in employment, access to State and local government services, places of public accommodation, transportation, and commercial facilities. According to 2012 US Census Data, 20 percent of the population in the United States reports having some form of disability. Census figures also project that the number of people 65 and older will more than double by 2030.

### **Enforcement of the ADA**

The Department of Justice (DOJ) develops and enforces regulations for the five titles of the ADA, including Title III which states that all new construction and modifications to public accommodations and commercial facilities must meet the ADA's requirements for accessible design. The DOJ developed its first set of ADA Title III requirements in 1991, followed in 2010 with new standards for accessible design. Title III also requires removal of architectural barriers in existing facilities unless "not readily achievable."

### **ADA Compliant Entrances**

While Title III and the accompanying regulations do not require the use of automatic doors, their use enhances access for all individuals, including the disabled, the elderly, travelers, and parents with small children. Ease of access translates to a better experience by eliminating potentially embarrassing situations and missed opportunities for participation in daily life which most of us take for granted.



Although the ADA's Accessibility Guidelines and the Architectural Barriers Act do not scope for automatic doors, building codes both nationally (most states have their own building codes) and internationally may require the use of automatic doors for public buildings.

Even with such requirements at the national and state level, accessibility remains a challenge for many citizens. Remediating this challenge is a priority for the American Association of Automatic Door Manufacturers (AAADM).

### **AAADM Position**

AAADM supports the ADA and any state laws and regulations that help ensure that entrances to a wide range of public facilities are accessible to all who wish to enter. Independent access, without the need to rely on others for assistance, is a core aspiration of many who are disabled. AAADM has worked for many years with the International Code Council to encourage the use of automatic doors that help the disabled maintain their independence when it comes to ingress and egress. AAADM also partners with regulatory agencies to increase accessibility and provide for the safety of the general public.

To ensure the safety of the general public, AAADM promotes compliance with the ANSI/BHMA Standard for Power Operated Pedestrian Doors, a national standard that defines and governs installation, sensing devices and safety requirements for automatic pedestrian doors. To further the safety of automatic doors, AAADM supports annual inspections of automatic doors in accordance with current industry standards as well as inspections of new installations.

AAADM endorses safe, convenient access for all whether through legislation, building codes, or standards. Individuals with accessibility needs should have easy access to any public building, including schools (often used as polling places), restaurants, health care facilities, and houses of worship. Lack of access often prohibits physically challenged individuals from fully participating in many activities and events.

AAADM and its members have a long tradition of supporting accessibility laws, regulations, and codes. AAADM's members often confront the challenge of accessibility as they work with architects, builders, and contractors to make buildings more accessible for everyone. This first-hand experience motivates AAADM's support for legislation that addresses the dilemma that many of their fellow citizens confront every day – to enter or not to enter a public place for work, fun, education, civic duty, or worship. More than a convenience, automatic doors serve a compelling public interest in facilitating access to public buildings and places of accommodation for all, but especially for the elderly and disabled. Everyone deserves to be able to navigate their world safely, easily, and independently.