Live / Beyond the Minimums: Accessibility Webinar Series / Part 1: Breaking Ground: Best Practices for Creating Accessible Routes and Surfacing in Parks and Recreation Facilities

Wednesday, March 8, 2024

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Q&A

- Can you say more about the play area accessible routes? For the 60" wide route, are there allowable pinch points?
    - **YES**
- What are the dimensions?
    - **1008.2.4.1 is where the requirements can be found. 1008.2.4.1 Ground Level.**

At ground level, the clear width of accessible routes shall be 60 inches (1525 mm) minimum.

EXCEPTIONS: 1. In play areas less than 1000 square feet (93 m2), the clear width of accessible routes shall be permitted to be 44 inches (1120 mm) minimum if at least one turning space complying with 304.3 is provided where the restricted accessible route exceeds 30 feet (9145 mm) in length.

2. The clear width of accessible routes shall be permitted to be 36 inches (915 mm) minimum for a distance of 60 inches (1525 mm) maximum provided that multiple reduced width segments are separated by segments that are 60 inches (1525 mm) wide minimum and 60 inches (1525 mm) long minimum.

- We use the SMART System - is that considered Synthetic grass since that is the top surface?
    - **Yes.**

- If management has concerns about a unitary surface vs EWF with a known lack of maintenance, how do we convince them to use a better surface?
    - **Show the costs for the lifecycle of the surface materials for in the play area surface guide and the PlayCore resource "Strong Foundations".**
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- In MA, the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board does not recognize EWF as an accessible material. This has forced municipalities to use unitary surfaces. Is there another type of unitary surfacing not made out or rubber (synthetic grass or PIP)?
    - **Refer to resource "Strong Foundations".**

- If a public play area was constructed 20 years ago, what triggers the need to bring the old play area equipment and related features up to current ADA and related Standards? When you alter the facility.
    - **Here is a link to a document on FAQ's for alterations in play areas for your review.**

- you mention press boxes on areas of sports activities slide. I understand the accessible route, but what if the press box is elevated? Do you have to ramp it for access or provide an elevator/lift**?**
    - **Here is a link further discusses the minimum requirements for press boxes.**

- Do cemeteries carry a specific requirement?
    - **To construct facilities. Not to individual gravesites. Please get in touch with the Department of Justice for additional information at 800-514-0301 or www.ada.gov**

- How do you quantify the number of elevated play components that must be accessible? For example, does a slide, game, bridge, each swing, etc., all count separately?
    - **Yes. Here is a link to a play area guide that can help you understand how to evaluate an existing play area.**

- Shouldn't pea gravel be crushed, not whole? So it can be compacted.
    - **Pea gravel typically is not an accessible surface material and does not compact well. Crushing the stone may help it compact better.**

- I've heard a suggestion that it can be helpful to have a wider "lay-by" area occasionally on paths to allow people space to rest, talk, or create space for passing. Are there any requirements or guidelines for the spacing or size of these widened areas? Or is this more of a suggestion than a requirement?
    - **Passing spaces are required when the route is only 36 inches wide. Resting areas are required when running slopes exceed 8% running on pedestrian trails. It is recommended to provide less running slope and wider routes than the minimums to ensure independent and safe access by all.**

- When an ADA requirement can't be met due to one of the exceptions in the ADAAG, can the rationale be submitted to the access board for review and confirmation, or does one document it in the file in case it's challenged later?
    - **The ADA is enforced by the Department of Justice. The Access Board could provide technical assistance. I would suggest that the project file be documented as to why the minimums could not be met. I would advise the standard would still require compliance to the maximum extent possible.**

- Are there any certifications for ADA (Accessibility)?
    - **There is no certification process for the ADA.**

- For the 60" play route, are pinch points allowable?
    - **Question addressed earlier in document.**

- For existing playground renovations... curb ramps into play areas; in some instances, a flared side curb ramp is not usable due to the play area's fall zone requirements/size. A ramp without a flared side may be required (i.e., just the 12:1 ramp segment - no 10:1 flared sides). Handrails are not required for curb ramps into play areas, but does this type of ramp configuration require edge protection if the top of the engineered wood fiber elevation is approximately 3" - 6" below the top landing elevation of the curb ramp?

    - **A curb ramp is defined as a short ramp cutting through a curb or built up to it. A ramp into a play area would need to meet the requirements for a ramp found in section 405 of the standard.**

- We want to switch from loose fill to PIP. Would we need to redo the entire playground to change?
    - **Surfacing can be switched without changing the equipment. Here is a link to the alterations FAQ's.**

- The ramp landing at the bottom of the ramp appeared to be square 5' x 5'. Is the bottom landing req'd to be 5'x5' if you're on grade and turning to sidewalk vs. a ramp leg changing directions.
    - **Intermediate landings between runs must be at least 60" wide clear and 60" long clear where ramps change direction (any change from linear). Handrails, edge protection, vertical posts and other elements cannot obstruct or overlap the minimum 60" by 60" clearance. The 12" minimum handrail extensions required at the top and bottom of ramp runs must be in the same direction of the run, but they can turn or wrap where handrails are continuous at the inside turn of dogleg or switchback ramps. More information can be found at the following resource: https://www.access-board.gov/ada/guides/chapter-4-ramps-and-curb-ramps/**

- Of the avaialble unitary surface materials fro playgrounds which of them are preferred most by those with mobility issues?
    - **Poured in Place Rubber is considered the most accessible. Tile is also considered highly accessible.**

- How compacted can EWF be and still meet fall attenuation?
    - **EWF is defined as wood ground to a fibrous consistency. It is different than wood chips or garden mulch in that there is a requirement stated in ASTM F2075 for particle size distribution and purity, which allows the product to "knit" together creating a stable surface for mobility devices. When installing EWF, it is recommended to utilize a layer of gravel for drainage. The next layer should be a geotextile cloth. On top of that should be a loose-fill layer meeting the specifications and fall height requirements of the environment. EWF surfacing should also meet ASTM F1951. This can be accomplished by installing the material to manufacturer's installation instructions, otherwise, it may not meet accessibility standards. EWF surfaces are better suited for playgrounds, landscapes, and trails. More information can be found here: https://www.playcore.com/news/surfacing-types and here: https://www.access-board.gov/aba/guides/chapter-10-play-surfaces/**

- Is there a consensus yet on whether the surfacing at fitness equipment needs to be fall-attenuating or not?
    - **ASTM has released standards that apply to outdoor fitness equipment. The ASTM Publication F3101-15 , Standard Specification for Unsupervised Public Use Outdoor Fitness Equipment establishes parameters for the design and manufacture of outdoor fitness equipment intended for use by individuals 13 and older. Fall attenuating surfacing is required for any equipment where the users feet leave the ground, in a depth related to the fall height from the equipment.**