



Department of
Building and Housing

Te Tari Kaupapa Whare



**Barrier Free
NEW ZEALAND
TRUST**

The international symbol of access



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Disclaimer

This booklet is not a Compliance Document, and may be updated from time to time. It is issued as guidance information under section 175 of the Building Act 2004. It has been produced by the Department of Building and Housing in association with the Barrier Free New Zealand Trust. This document is not a substitute for professional advice, and advice should be sought for establishing compliance with the relevant requirements of the Building Act 2004 in individual cases.

Introduction

This booklet provides information on the international symbol of access; the symbol used to indicate the features and facilities in buildings that can be used by people with disabilities.

The symbol represents all disabilities. The symbol is not only for people in wheelchairs, but represents anyone with a disability – that is anyone whose mobility is restricted. It is universally recognised.

Correctly displaying the symbol is important for the New Zealand community, as well as for visitors to the country. The symbol can help greatly in ensuring people with disabilities are able to undertake normal activities and processes in buildings.

The purpose of this booklet is to clarify how and when the international symbol of access should be applied to a building.

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WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL SYMBOL OF ACCESS?

The international symbol of access (ISA) is an internationally recognisable primary information symbol. Its origin dates back to 1969, when it was adopted by the 11th World Congress of Rehabilitation International for use throughout the world to indicate building features that are suitable for people with disabilities.

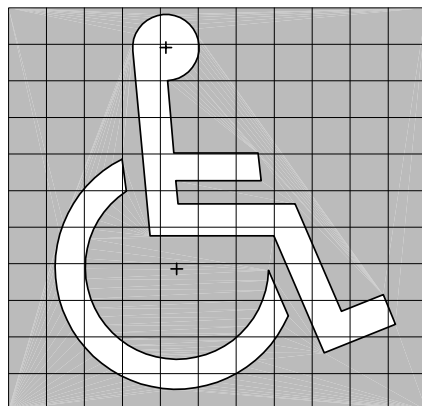
The ISA design is registered as ISO Standard 7000 1984. As an international standard, the copyright design for style, shape and proportion is protected worldwide 'to identify, mark or show the way to buildings and facilities that are accessible to and usable by all those persons whose mobility is restricted'.

Rehabilitation International provides some guidance on using the ISA, but the procedures for its display and use are managed individually by each country. In New Zealand the ISA is managed by the Barrier Free New Zealand Trust.

Whilst the ISA shows a stylised wheelchair, it does in fact represent all disabilities.



The international symbol of access.



How to produce the international symbol of access in the correct proportions

WHY MUST THE ISA BE USED?

The statutory provisions for accessibility in New Zealand are contained in the Building Act 2004 and the Building Code.

Section 120 of the Building Act states that, 'If any provision required by section 118 [for access for people with disabilities] is made at a building in compliance with that section, a notice or sign that indicates in accordance with the international symbol of access that provision is made for the needs of persons with disabilities must be displayed outside the building or so as to be visible from outside it'.

Clause F8.2 of the Building Code states that, 'Signs shall be provided in and about buildings to identify accessible routes and facilities for people with disabilities'. Details of the ISA sign and its style, proportions and colour contrast are contained in F8/AS1 in the Compliance Document for Building Code Clause F8 Signs and in NZS 4121: 2001 Design for Access and Mobility.

Territorial authorities have the legal responsibility for enforcing the display of the ISA.

WHERE CAN THE ISA BE USED?

The symbol can be used only on buildings or facilities that comply with the requirements of the Building Code for accessibility. Showing the symbol on facilities that are non-compliant would contravene the Building Act, and mislead people with disabilities.

Buildings that have a code compliance certificate issued under the Building Act 1991 or 2004 may use the ISA. This includes buildings built since 1992, as well as older buildings that have had their accessibility upgraded to Building Code standards under the 'as nearly as is reasonably practicable' provisions contained in both Acts.

For a building to show the ISA, it must at least have an accessible entrance and an accessible route to the internal spaces of the building. The purpose of the building will determine what other accessible provisions must be made.

An audit of access can be done on request by a territorial authority, or by an accredited Barrier Free Advisor registered with the Barrier Free New Zealand Trust. If the audit shows the access provisions meet Building Code requirements, it is acceptable to display the symbol.

DETAILS OF DESIGN AND DISPLAY

All ISA signs should be positioned and located consistently. Their size, type and lettering must be clear and legible, and contrast with the background.

Generally, the symbol should be white on a blue background, although other colours can be used to suit a particular decor, provided there is equivalent contrast between the symbol and its background.

In New Zealand we have come to expect accessible car parks to have yellow ground markings. This colour is considered to have stronger contrast than blue in this situation. Blue and white remain the preferred colours for displaying the ISA on posts or walls above a parking space.

Signs should be fixed on a wall or other vertical surface and be placed 1400 mm to 1700 mm from the floor or ground level to the lower edge of the sign plate.

For signs identifying a facility, the figure must face to the right. For indicating the direction to a facility, the figure must face in the direction being indicated.



This sign reflects the style and colour of the other signs in the building and yet manages to retain the usual white on blue background for the ISA.



Other signs to help people with sensory impairments, such as the International Sign for Deafness (Slashed Ear), may be used in conjunction with the ISA.

THE THREE KEY FUNCTIONS OF THE SYMBOL

The ISA has three key functions.

- 1 **Informative:** advising about availability of a facility or service
- 2 **Directional:** directing to a specific facility
- 3 **Locational:** identifying the place where the facility is provided

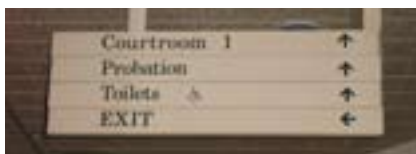
Informative

It is important for people with disabilities visiting a building to know whether accessible facilities have been provided. Displaying the ISA outside a building immediately shows that accessible facilities are available inside.

Not having to ask whether a building is accessible enhances an individual's independence.

When the ISA is displayed on a place of assembly, the expectation is that the suitable wheelchair spaces are provided along with parking (if any), toilets, an accessible ticket counter, plus an assistive hearing device. Then inside the building, directional and locational signage should identify where these amenities are.

For accommodation facilities, the ISA is most useful on a street billboard, in promotional material or on the door or window of the reception. The ISA should not be displayed on the door of the accessible room or unit.



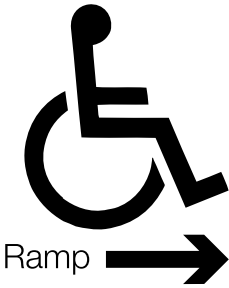
A noticeboard should include information on if, or where, accessible facilities are available.



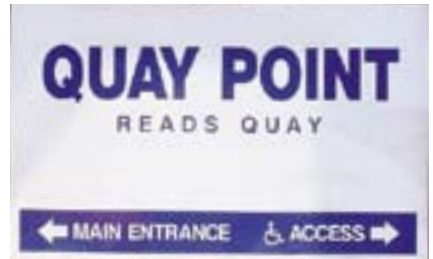
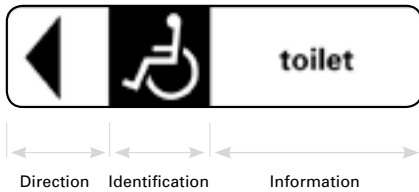
Sometimes in a series of lifts, one will have the ISA. This indicates that this lift will stay open longer than the required 5 seconds. However, the 'Paraplegic use only' is inappropriate; the ISA covers everyone with restricted mobility.

Directional

Knowing an accessible amenity is provided is one thing, but finding it can be difficult unless directional signage provides this information. For example, an arrow showing the location of a ramp is simple, but valuable.



Similar signs can be used for locating accessible toilets and car parks (see below and opposite). An example is also given in Figure 5 of F8/AS1 in the Compliance Document for Building Code Clause F8 Signs.



Billboards, whether internal or external, should have directional information for guiding those with restricted mobility. Not everyone can climb stairs or use an escalator.

Locational

Using the ISA to identify car parks and toilets is essential. The ISA is usually sufficient by itself, but if wording is required it should be kept short. A sign should use the word 'accessible', not the word 'disabled', which is inappropriate when used in this way.



A typical parking sign makes it clear that the park is only for people with disabilities.



Above is an excellent example of how the ISA should be displayed. Words are not required. These signs are understood internationally.



Clear colour contrast makes identification easier for all users.



An example of overkill. The word 'disabled' is unnecessary as the toilet is not disabled, but is compliant with the Building Code.

ACCESSIBLE FACILITIES

The accessible facilities required in any particular building are defined by the Building Act and the Building Code (see www.dbh.govt.nz).

A Building Code-compliant building will always have an accessible route into the building from the car parking area and footpath. This accessible route will continue through the internal spaces of the building and include the accessible facilities.

When older buildings are upgraded, the accessible entrance is sometimes not the main entrance. In these situations, directional signs at the main entrance should indicate where the accessible journey into the building begins.



This sign on the steps of a heritage building shows clearly that an accessible entrance is available elsewhere.

The accessible features on an accessible route within a building will depend on the type of building and may include:

- car parks
- a reception or service counter
- lifts
- at least one accessible stair
- ramps (only if necessary)
- wheelchair spaces in places of assembly
- toilets
- showers
- a kitchen in accessible accommodation
- a laundry in association with accessible accommodation
- suitably located controls (light switches, door handles, lift buttons)
- a listening system or listening devices
- clear signage indicating the location of facilities.



An accessible entrance beside the main entrance steps in a historic building. The well-signaged sliding glass door leads to a lift – the beginning of the accessible route within the building.

CONCLUSION

The international symbol of access enables people with disabilities to quickly establish the type and location of the facilities available in a building.

One of the 'purposes and principles' of the Building Act is that buildings have attributes that contribute appropriately to the physical independence of the people who use them. The correct use of the ISA helps directly with achieving this purpose of the Act.

The benefit of an accessible building is that the building can be used by all members of the community.

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