



Tip Sheet: Making emergency information accessible to the public

Public safety information can help keep people safe when an emergency happens. Ontario's Accessibility Standard for Information and Communications can help you do that by making your emergency and public safety information accessible to people with disabilities.

Does this apply to my organization?

It applies to you if you answer 'yes' to **both** of these questions:

- Do you have emergency procedures, plans or public safety information?
- Do you make them available to the public?

What is emergency and public safety information?

There are many types of emergency and public safety information, for example:

- Emergency plans and procedures, such as tour boat instructions on how to use a lifejacket
- Maps, warning signs and evacuation routes, such as a "Warning: High Voltage" sign or a map pointing out emergency exits
- Information you give the public about alarms or other emergency alerts, such as a brochure explaining how a hotel fire alarm works

What do I have to do?

As of **January 1, 2012**:

- Upon request, make your emergency and public safety information accessible to people with disabilities.
- Work with the person requesting the information to figure out how you can meet their needs, as soon as possible.

You don't have to have accessible formats on hand and you don't have to create new emergency or public safety information. Real-time emergency information (such as announcements and alarms) isn't included in the standard. You only have to make information that is available to the public accessible, upon request.



How do I do it?

1. Assess your information

Focus on things you create before an emergency strikes, like evacuation plans, brochures or signs. Is there anything that would make it hard for someone with a disability to read, see, hear or understand?

2. Make it accessible upon request

The law doesn't tell you what formats to use; it's flexible so you can work with the public to figure out what they need.

You can make a document accessible by recreating it in a different format; for example, printing it in large print for someone with vision loss. But you can also make information accessible by helping someone to use the original document or resource; for example, by reading it aloud.

Tip:

Whenever you create documents, build them as structured electronic files. It's simple to apply a 'style' to titles, headings, etc. and it makes them look better by keeping formatting consistent. If you create all your documents this way, then it's easy to turn them into accessible formats. For more information visit <http://adod.idrc.ocad.ca/>

3. Provide it as soon as possible

In some cases, you may be able to make the information accessible instantly. In other cases, it may take longer – it depends on the individual's needs, the format and your organization's resources.

Examples

- Norman works for a small, family-run motel where the fire escape procedures are posted on the back of every door. Norman wants to print the maps in a tactile format, but cannot afford the cost. Instead, when a guest with vision loss asks for this information, Norman talks to the guest about his needs, and walks him through the evacuation procedure.
- Before customers start to play, Stan's paintball and laser tag company shows a short video on what to do if someone gets hurt. A customer with hearing loss asks for an accessible format, so Stan gives her a transcript of what's said in the video.