

ADA Accessibility Guidelines

In the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (ADAAG), which formed parts of the ADA of 1990, builders and designers were encouraged under Appendix A 4.5 to specify materials for flooring surfaces that have a static coefficient of friction values no less than 0.6 for level surfaces and 0.8 for ramped surfaces.

In hearings conducted in Washington, DC on March 13, 2000, the guidelines (which were issued in 1991) were roundly criticized on scientific grounds and were the cause of considerable confusion. Many parties testifying at the hearing stated that the numbers were misinterpreted and unfortunately misused as requirements by specifiers and others. The inventor of the slip tester on which these requirements were based has publicly stated that the ADA requirements never should have been based on the results of the tests on his equipment.

As a result of the hearing in March 2000, the Access Board decided to eliminate the original coefficient of friction guidelines and replace them with these sections in the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design which are in effect today:

Chapter 3: Building Blocks

302 Floor or Ground Surfaces

302.1 General.

Floor and ground surfaces shall be stable, firm and slip resistant and shall comply with 302.

Advisory 302.1

A stable surface is one that remains unchanged by contaminants or applied force, so that when the contaminant or force is removed, the surface returns to its original condition. A firm surface resists deformation by either indentations or particles moving on its surface. A slip-resistant surface provides sufficient frictional counterforce to the forces exerted in walking to permit safe ambulation.

Chapter 4: Accessible Routes

403 Walking Surfaces

403.1 General

Walking Surfaces that are part of an accessible route shall comply with 403.

403.2 Floor or Ground Surface. Floor or ground surfaces shall comply with 302.