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Advocacy and Beds

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By Joe Brown

For many of us who use a Hoyer-type lift and have experienced the frustration of beds in motels on a solid base frame, I have good news! Being an advocate can be very rewarding to you and also to many others. Following is a summary of the process I went through. It might take a while, but don’t give up!

About ten years ago I found that Florida had a law requiring motels/hotels to have beds with clearance for a Hoyer lift in handicap-designated rooms. I contacted Florida’s office on disability and obtained the wording for their “bed law.”

This became my “blueprint” for wording my request to the N.J. Building Code Board. After a few years of going back with changes, the board passed the open-bed-frame law, which went into effect April 5, 1999.

I then wrote to all 50 states, showing them the law and requesting they consider passing a similar one. This proposal was not well received, and I was given a polite no.

My next step was web searching and asking if anyone had an idea on how to make this a law nationwide. Well, I got lucky when I received an e-mail from Marsha Mazz of the U.S. Access Board. She suggested I send my request to the International Code Council, which I did. Mazz and ICC staff members Kim Paarlberg and Jay Woodward helped me develop proposals for the International Building Code (IBC) and the referenced accessibility standard, ICC A117.1 Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities. The approved revisions will be in the 2012 IBC and the 2009 ICC A117.1.

The result is that in accessible hotel rooms, at least one bed must have an open frame so a Hoyer lift can be used. Since IBC is now used by all 50 states, this will be a national requirement for accessible hotel rooms in new construction and accessible hotel rooms that are being altered. Once a state adopts the code (typically between July 2012 and July 2013), this requirement will be enforced by code officials.

This is the approved text that deals with beds in hotel rooms. The scoping (i.e., what, where, and how many) is in the 2012 IBC.

CHAPTER 11 ACCESSIBILITY

Section 1107 Dwelling and Sleeping units

1107.6.1 Group R-1

1107.6.1.1.1 Accessible unit facilities. All interior and exterior spaces provided as part of or serving an Accessible dwelling unit or sleeping unit shall be accessible and be located on an accessible route.

EXCEPTIONS:

- Where multiple bathrooms are provided within an Accessible unit, at least one full bathroom shall be accessible.

- Where multiple family or assisted bathrooms serve an Accessible unit, at least 50% but not less than one room for each use at each cluster shall be accessible. Five percent, but not less than one bed shall be accessible. The technical requirements (i.e., how to) are in the ICC A117.1-2009.

Chapter 10 Dwelling Units and Sleeping units

Section 1002 Accessible Units

1002.15 Beds. In at least one sleeping area, a minimum of five percent, but not less than one bed, shall comply with Section 1002.15.

1002.15.1 Clear Floor Space. A clear floor space complying with Section 305 shall be provided on both sides of the bed. The clear floor space shall be positioned for parallel approach to the side of the bed.

EXCEPTION: Where a single clear floor space complying with Section 305 positioned for parallel approach is provided between two beds, a clear floor space shall not be required on both sides of the bed.

1002.15.2 Bed Frames. At least one bed shall be provided with an open bed frame.