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Beds in Accessible Guest Rooms- Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund

The typical seat height of a wheelchair is 19" above the floor, a dimension that was published in the ADA Accessibility Guidelines in 1991,^[1] and which can still be seen today in the common 19" to 20" seat height of popular models of wheelchairs. ^[2] Consequently, a bed that is substantially higher than 20 inches presents a problem for most wheelchair users.

We recommend as follows:

- Require beds in the accessible guestrooms to measure 20 to 23 inches high from the floor to the top of the mattress, whether or not it is compressed. This is based on a sampling of 50 different wheelchair heights by Access Compliance Services, as well as on the range of bed heights that were found in the first years after the ADA became effective, before bed heights increased so dramatically. In those early years, these lower bed heights did not appear to pose a problem.
- Require bed frames that can readily be removed, thus lowering the bed when requested by guests. This would likely mean that stationary box frames are not acceptable.
- Have adjustable legs, either as part of the existing frame, or various height bed risers that can be added to the frame (the latter currently exist on the market).
- Require at least one accessible room to be equipped with a ceiling transfer lift.
- While the least beneficial, at the very minimum, information about bed heights should be readily available on a property's website, with the reservation department, and at the front desk.

Franchise Systems Inc., a leader in the lodging industry for marketing to travelers with disabilities, recognized early on that their implementation of a new bed initiative might cause problems for people with limited mobility.

Working with bed manufacturers Sealy, Serta, and Simmons, Franchise Systems was able to design a low-profile box spring (5 1/2") that offers both a high level of comfort while maintaining accessibility for people with mobility limitations. The California building code also requires at least a 7" vertical clearance under the bed for lift access. Franchise Systems was able to achieve that standard as well and still have their beds measure no higher than 23-inches.

Some Hyatt Hotels report intentionally limiting the height of beds in their accessible guest rooms to 19 inches high.^[3]

A safe and usable bed height of approximately 21" can be achieved with standard brand stock products, without the need for customized sizes, and still use today's popular thicker mattresses. For example:

- 7-1/2 inch high bed frame^[4]
- 2-inch high low-profile box spring^[5]
- 12-inch high mattress^[6]