

INTERIOR DESIGNERS CREATE ACCESSIBLE INTERIORS FOR ALL AMERICANS



The interior design profession masters building codes, standards, and legal regulations to build public and private spaces accessible to all persons regardless of disability.

The American Society of Interior Designers traces its roots back more than 80 years and serves the full range of the interior design profession and practice through the Society's programs, networks, and advocacy. Our nationwide members represent individuals of all specialties, including workplace, healthcare, retail and hospitality, education, institutional, and residential practice, students, and corporate industry partners. We spend approximately 90 percent of our lives in interior environments, so our members use evidence-based and humancentric design to affect comfort, accessibility, safety, wellness, and sustainability. Much more than simply aesthetic decorators, our designers showcase the impact of design through the creation of interior architectural elements and spaces where we live, work, play, and heal using data, science, building codes, and regulatory standards.

The Society believes that design transforms lives, especially for the elderly and disabled. Per the Office of Access and Functional Needs at the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, **approximately 70 percent of fatalities during Hurricane Katrina were people with access and functional needs.** This disturbing statistic is proof that good disaster preparedness requires good design and construction before an adverse event. Besides studying building codes to ensure a design's health and safety, certified interior design professionals master the design guidelines set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA's design standards ensure that publicly-accessible buildings meet the needs of persons with disabilities. It is our belief that design – residential or commercial, for private or public intent – truly affects everyone. This is why we unwaveringly advocate for universal design, a practice that seeks to create environments that can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible regardless of age, sex, size, or ability. As designers, it is our members' responsibility to think about design with people and purpose in mind, so that no one person has to bear the weight or responsibility of access, which is as fundamental to human rights as it is to good design.

► INTERIOR DESIGNERS AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment that can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of age, size, ability, or disability. By considering the diverse needs and abilities of all throughout the design process, universal design creates products, services, and environments that meet peoples' needs. It is imperative to include basic design features such as accessible restrooms, ample handrails, adjustable workstations, and adequate lighting to enhance a person's experience within a building.

Examples of universal design for Americans with access and functional needs include:

- Allowing enough floor space to accommodate a stationary wheelchair
- Including tables or counters at a variety of heights to accommodate standing, seating, and a range of physical disabilities
- Providing shelves and medicine cabinets that can be reached by persons seated in a wheelchair
- Making sure entry doors to rooms are the appropriate width to accommodate a wheelchair, per regulations
- Mounting bathroom sinks at a suitable distance from the floor, per regulations
- Installing grab bars in the shower and beside the toilet
- Avoiding uneven floors and other floor surfaces that could pose slipping and tripping hazards
- Ensuring restroom stalls include ample space for a wheelchair to turn around
- Including hoists and changing benches in restrooms
- Installing viewing platforms to accommodate disabled individuals in large crowds. These platforms help the visually impaired see the performance, and help the hearing impaired stay focused on the proceedings
- Considering accessibility features when choosing a space for conferences, festivals, and other events
- Designing offices for workers with a range of abilities, ages, reading levels, learning styles, languages, cultures, and more
- Equipping offices with flexible furniture, height adjustable desks, accessible plug sockets, underfloor power and cable management, and adjustable monitor arms
- Ensuring elevators are easy to find, enter, and exit, while stairs should include well-marked signage and railings

