



IMO

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ACCESS TO MARINE PASSENGER TERMINALS FOR ELDERLY  
AND DISABLED PASSENGERS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 There has been growing recognition by the IMO Facilitation Committee of the difficulties faced by disabled persons in participating in the social and economic life of the community in which they live and of the need to alleviate these difficulties. Estimates suggest that approximately 5% to 10% of the world population can be categorized as disabled, and that, of this group, a large proportion is elderly. With the progressive ageing of the world population, the proportion will rise.

1.2 This circular deals with some of the more important problems involving access to marine passenger terminals for the elderly and disabled and arrangements for transport by sea. These problems are considered under four main headings:

- .1 transportation to and from ports;
- .2 parking facilities and exterior access to marine passenger terminals;
- .3 movement within the terminal, to and from the ship, and on board ships (including use of facilities and services); and
- .4 communication aspects and training of staff.

All four problem areas apply to all passengers who are not travelling by car on ferries; the latter two apply to all elderly and disabled passengers.

Summary of previous developments

1.3 United Nations - Since the early 1970s, the United Nations General Assembly has passed a number of resolutions affirming the rights of disabled persons, based upon the principles of the Universal Bill of Human Rights, which have led to initiatives being taken on their behalf by the international community.

1.4 The United Nations has adopted the term "disabled persons" as a general designation, based on the distinction made by the World Health Organization (WHO) between the concepts of "impairment", "disability" and "handicapped", which emphasizes that the handicaps are the disadvantages that may result from either an impairment or a disability. The terms "elderly" and "disabled" used in the following are thus consistent with current usage in the United Nations system.

1.5 In 1975, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (resolution 3447 XXX). Subsequently, 1981 was proclaimed the International Year for Disabled Persons (resolution 32/133). Later, the period 1983-1992 was declared the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (resolution 37/53) in order to promote the implementation of required measures over a longer period. An important development has been the assertion of the rights of the disabled by the General Assembly, which affirmed for example that disabled persons "have the same fundamental rights as their fellow-citizens" and "are entitled to the measures designed to enable them to become as self-reliant as possible" (resolution 3447 XXX). The General Assembly also called on interested parties to improve "access to public buildings and transportation systems" (resolution 31/123) and has noted that "disability should be viewed as a relationship between an individual and his or her environment" (resolution 34/154). In addition, United Nations specialized agencies were urged to take specific action in their areas of competence.

1.6 ICAO - ICAO adopted measures to facilitate air travel by the elderly and disabled as early as 1968, when a Recommended Practice (paragraph 6.24 of Annex 9 to the Chicago Convention dealing with facilitation of air transport, now renumbered 6.29 in the Eighth Edition) was adopted urging that invalid passengers be assisted in making a direct transfer from one aircraft to another. A second recommendation (B-17) called for the provision of facilities for the proper care and handling of invalid passengers at international airports where this was warranted by the volume of traffic.

1.7 Later, in 1979, ICAO considered whether work in this field should be aimed at the air transport system as a whole or limited to the movement of physically handicapped persons at airports. It decided in favour of the more limited approach. ICAO, noting the work being undertaken at that time by states, airlines and airports, recommended that guidance material should be gathered to provide additional information to states (Recommendation No. B-9), and that appropriate amendments should be made to Annex 9 and to the Airport Planning Manual (ICAO Doc.9184-AN/902). Accordingly, when the second edition of the Manual was issued in 1987, part I was expanded to include a new section (9.11) entitled "Consideration of Disabled and Elderly People in Passenger Building Planning", reflecting some of the information submitted by states.

1.8 In 1986, the ICAO Assembly adopted resolution A.26-13 requesting the ICAO Council to complete a review of the problems encountered by elderly and disabled persons to determine what measures might be adopted on a world-wide basis to improve their access to airports and air services. The Council concluded that the most effective first step would be to study and identify those problems which could enable action to be taken at an early date. The problems, involving access to airports, were subsequently identified as transportation to and from airport terminal buildings, movement within terminal buildings (including use of facilities and services therein) and to and from aircraft, and communications and training. In September 1988, the adoption of a new standard and four new recommended practices, for inclusion in Annex 9, as well as a general recommendation dealing with those particular areas to improve access by elderly and disabled persons to airports, was recommended.

2 DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED AT MARINE PASSENGER TERMINALS AND ON BOARD SHIPS

Transportation to and from ports

2.1 Problem - Public transport accessible to disabled persons is rarely available for travel to and from most ports. The alternatives are relatively expensive taxi services or private transport. Consequently, travel to and from ports is more costly, difficult and time-consuming for disabled persons than for the general public.

2.2 Comments - The mobility-impaired population consists of people with a variety of needs and problems. Regardless of the degree of impairment, every link in the chain must be manageable and accessible. Furthermore, this segment of the population is less likely to have access to private automobiles and is, therefore, heavily reliant on public transport services.

2.3 Frequently, the terminal operators have a certain measure of control over the services provided by transportation operators from a port, but does not possess this authority for the provision of such services to a port. Ports may enter into agreements with transportation operators for the provision of a variety of services operating from a port in order to influence the level of service offered and attempt to control vehicle flow to and from the port. This is especially important at busy ports where the amount of traffic is such that frequent congestion occurs at the terminal curb.

2.4 A large proportion of the disabled suffer from impaired hearing or vision, or are simply frail, elderly or arthritic. Minor and relatively low-cost improvements can often be made to existing vehicles to facilitate access by such persons. Improvements include lower steps, handrails, colour contrasts, clear announcements and the possibility to sit down in the bus before it moves. Use of private automobiles can be facilitated by providing special long-term parking concessions and by ensuring the availability, on prior notification, of hand-control equipped vehicles from car rental companies.

2.5 In the United Kingdom, it has been estimated that only 2% to 3% of the disabled require wheelchairs. Measures which are increasingly being adopted to facilitate travel by this category of ambulatory disabled are so-called "dial-a-ride" systems. Consideration is also being given to ensuring that a certain proportion of taxis are equipped to carry wheelchairs.

2.6 Need:

- .1 to ensure the availability of public transport for the handicapped and disabled at prices comparable to those paid by other members of the travelling public; and
- .2 to facilitate to the extent possible the use of taxi services and private transport for this category of passenger.

Parking facilities and exterior access to marine passenger terminals

2.7 Problem - Where suitably designed and designated parking spaces are provided, disabled persons may experience difficulty in moving to and from the terminal building, either due to the lack of shuttle services, the distance involved or lack of protection from extreme weather conditions. Movement between the transport drop-off and pick-up points and the terminal entrance may also present difficulties.

2.8 Comments - Some ports have designated parking areas for use by vehicles carrying disabled persons and displaying appropriate parking identification permits. The routes to these areas should be clearly marked and appropriate signs posted. Attention should also be given to the design and placement of meters or parking ticket dispensers. Parking spaces should be identified by internationally recognized symbols and be located as close as possible to the entrance to the terminal building and to barrier-free access routes.

2.9 Individual parking spaces should be sufficiently large to enable passengers to move comfortably between cars and wheelchairs and be situated so that persons using wheelchairs, crutches or braces are not compelled to move behind parked cars. To the extent possible, the access route to the terminal should be sheltered.

2.10 For handicapped passengers being set down or picked up at the terminal building, reserved points should be located as close as possible to terminal entrances, which should be clearly marked and signs posted. There should not be any stairs between the set-down point and the check-in desk area and any ramps to the main access doors should not have a steeper gradient than 1 in 12 (1 in 16 is preferred).

2.11 Need:

- .1 to make available accessible long- and short-term parking spaces, associated facilities (e.g. parking meters, ticket dispensers, lifts and call boxes) and services (e.g. shuttle buses, baggage trollies and porters) on arrival;
- .2 to facilitate movement from parking facilities to the terminal building to the extent possible; and
- .3 to ensure barrier-free access to terminals from transport drop-off and pick-up points.

Movement within the terminal, to and from the ship and on board the ship (including the use of facilities and services)

2.12 Problem - The ability of elderly and disabled persons to move without obstruction is limited by the existence of physical barriers, such as stairs, narrow doors and corridors. Where suitably designed counters are not available, difficulties may be experienced at check-in, customs, passport control and banking or money exchange points. Difficulties are also encountered in the absence of suitable facilities such as toilets, telephones and drinking water fountains. Even though barrier-free movement may be possible within the terminal building, problems may arise in the use of personal wheelchairs to move to and from the access door to the ship. Problems may also arise when passengers embark a ro-ro ferry in a car through the car deck.

2.13 Comments - There is a growing need to provide barrier-free physical facilities at ports and on board ships and many countries have adopted design specifications for building codes for public buildings incorporating provisions to this effect. Most new ships have passenger lifts and open interior spaces. However, difficulties still exist in many older buildings and ships where the removal of barriers may require extensive or costly work.

2.14 Physical design standards to assist the mobility-impaired and wheelchair users have been developed for ramps, elevators, doors, passageways and toilets; the placement of elevator control panels, telephones and drinking water fountains; and the provision of dedicated facilities for the disabled such as toilets that can be used by either sex. Despite improvements in these areas, interested user groups, particularly wheelchair users, identify continuing problems regarding access to service areas such as shops and restaurants, passport control, check-in and bank counters. The accessibility of these facilities will require special attention.

2.15 Departure lounges and public spaces on board ships are frequently crowded. When designing or refurbishing such areas, attention should be given to the provision of reserved seating for the disabled, including space for wheelchairs.

2.16 Need:

- .1 to ensure barrier-free movement between entrances and exits of the terminal building, preferably without change of levels;
- .2 to ensure access to all public areas such as duty-free shops, toilets, restaurants and other shops. Toilet facilities should also be available to wheelchair users accompanied by an attendant of either sex;
- .3 to ensure that the design of the toilets and drinking water fountains, telephones and elevator control panels are adapted to the needs of the mobility-impaired as well as the sensory-impaired;

- .4 to make available reserved seating areas for the elderly and disabled, including space for wheelchairs; and
- .5 to provide specially marked parking spaces on the car decks of ro-ro ferries near elevators for disabled passengers.

Communications aspects and training of staff

2.17 Problem - Disabled persons with speech, hearing, vision and cognitive impairments, as well as persons who are retarded or have hidden disabilities (sensory-impaired) encounter accessibility and communications barriers that are not as well understood as those experienced by persons whose walking is impaired (mobility-impaired). Difficulties are more likely to arise when shipping company and port staff lack sensitivity training in how to serve the elderly and disabled or where staff are not available to assist persons with communications difficulties.

2.18 Comments - The problems encountered by the mobility-impaired have been easier to recognize and address than those experienced by the sensory-impaired. A complicating factor in this regard is the variability in the degree of impairment, necessitating discernment on the part of staff in determining the appropriate assistance to offer without offending a person's need for assistance. Many elderly users of maritime transport may not regard themselves as disabled and yet encounter real difficulties in finding their way around strange, busy and noisy environments because of failing sight and hearing, as well as mobility problems.

2.19 Practical problems are encountered by the sensory-impaired passengers who may not be able to understand safety, security or information announcements. This problem may be further aggravated by difficulties in communicating with shipping company staff, including crew members or port staff, which can lead to feelings of anger, frustration, anxiety and a sense of isolation on the part of the disabled passenger. Such situations can arise, for example, where it is necessary for staff to explain special requirements or procedures or changes in schedules which may not be obvious. Training programmes should be co-ordinated to ensure the availability of staff of



appropriate communications skills who are able to respond to the varied needs of the elderly and disabled and are sensitive to their difficulties. Co-ordination and co-operation is required by all parties involved as well as proper dissemination of information.

2.20 Need:

- .1 to ensure that all visual instructions (i.e. safety information) be displayed in as large and clear a form as possible for the hearing-impaired and those with a degree of sight impairment; whenever necessary, spoken announcements, preceded by a tone to attract attention, should be provided for the blind and those with a high degree of sight impairment;
- .2 to ensure that appropriate means exist to communicate safety- and transport-related information to the hearing-impaired which may not otherwise be made known to them;
- .3 to improve communications to the sensory-impaired by designating special areas where all required aids and interpretation facilities might be centralized; and
- .4 to provide shipping company staff, port, immigration and customs personnel with standardized information and instructions on how to assist disabled passengers.

3 CONCLUSIONS

This circular focuses on providing access to marine passenger terminal facilities to the elderly and disabled passengers, to identify the main problems encountered by these passengers, and to define the action needed to overcome them. The suggested actions which may be taken by those responsible are outlined in paragraphs 2.6, 2.11, 2.16 and 2.20. As a second step towards achieving better facilities for this category of passengers, the IMO Facilitation Committee will in the future consider the inclusion of provisions in the Annex to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic of measures to facilitate maritime transport of elderly and disabled person; these may be:

.1 the inclusion in the Annex, section 3, of new recommended practices:

.1 the addition of the following subparagraph to Recommended Practice 3.11.1(a):

"(iii) to ensure that facilities and services are adapted to the needs of elderly and disabled persons".

.2 the insertion at an appropriate place in section 3 of the following four recommended practices:

"Recommended Practice. Measures should be taken to ensure that the hearing- and vision-impaired are able to obtain all necessary transport and safety information.

Recommended Practice. For elderly disabled persons being set down or picked up at a terminal building, reserved points should be located as close as possible to the main entrances. These should be clearly identified with appropriate signs. Access routes should be barrier-free.

Recommended Practice. Where access to public services is limited, every effort should be made to provide accessible and reasonably priced public transportation services, by adapting current and planned services, or by providing special arrangements for the mobility-impaired.

Recommended Practice. Provision of suitable elevator facilities should be made in terminals and on ships, as appropriate, to allow the safe embarkation and disembarkation of elderly and disabled persons".

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