

ADA AND OUTDOOR BENCHES

We can all agree that it is important to create outdoor spaces for everyone to enjoy, but there are some misconceptions about certain ADA regulations that make just the opposite a reality.

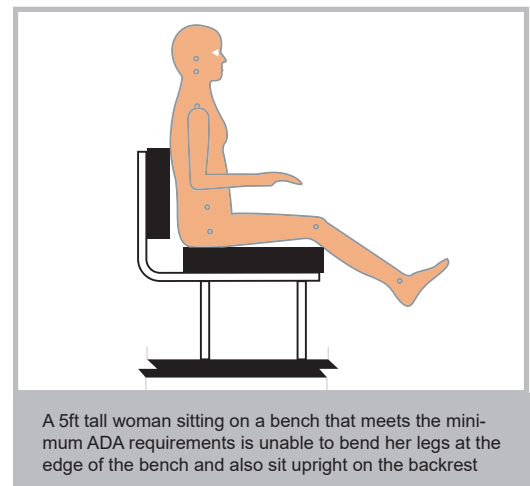
Section 903 Benches found in the ADA and ABA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (<https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-ada-standards/background/ada-aba-accessibility-guidelines-2004>) is often referenced for outdoor seating. However, those standards were developed for and are required only for the following specific instances and spaces:

Chapter 6: Plumbing Elements and Facilities - 612 Saunas and Steam Rooms

Chapter 8: Special Rooms, Spaces and Elements - 803 Dressing, Fitting, and Locker Rooms

Chapter 8: Special Rooms, Spaces and Elements - 807 Holding Cells and Housing Cells, 808 Courtrooms

Benches placed in the spaces noted above are utilized far differently than an outdoor bench and therefore require different design considerations. Notably, in the spaces mentioned above, it is common for a person to transfer from a wheelchair to a bench. However, in most outdoor recreational spaces, a person in a wheelchair will not move from their wheelchair to an outdoor bench. Furthermore, the seat depth dimensions utilized for an accessible fitting room, sauna, or holding cell bench when applied to an outdoor bench are uncomfortable for most people, especially shorter people.



Standards for Outdoor Benches

Outdoor benches are referenced in the Revised Draft Guidelines for Accessible Public Rights-of-Way* published by the United States Access Board in section R307.6.3 Benches. These standards require in spaces without tables at least 50 percent but no fewer than one bench have a seat height at the front edge of 43 cm (17 in) minimum and 49 cm (19 in) maximum above the ground or floor space with an advisory note that they have full back support and an armrest. Nearly all DuMor benches meet the height requirement of R.307.6.3.2. Additionally these standards recommend the same ratio of benches provide clear space complying with R402 positioned at the end of the bench seat and located for shoulder-to-shoulder seating.

Additional ways to make a space more inclusive

What are some additional ways you can make a space more inclusive for people with limited mobility? Utilize benches with graspable armrests that can be used as an aid to stand up and have an area underneath the bench free of obstruction for feet to position for standing. Pave the area up to, underneath, and around the bench. Choose seating that provides proper postural support and encourages an upright position with minimal/moderate recline.

*<https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/streets-sidewalks/public-rights-of-way/background/revised-draft-guidelines>