



National Access Authority (NAA) Update

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National Access Officer

EDITORS NOTE

Thank you so much for the warm words of welcome received from everyone since my appointment in February 2010. I'm looking forward to serving you as the National Access Officer. I have already had so many requests for Service and information over the last two months and I will respond to them all.

Your inputs to this Update will be appreciated and I wish to encourage everyone to share some experiences and thoughts on Access with me.

Know Your Rights

PEPUDA

Equality Courts and PEPUDA

Did you know that the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act or PEPUDA in short (Act no 4 of 2000) , is safeguarded in our constitution and gives persons with disabilities the right to lodge complaints against discriminatory practices.

PEPUDA aims to prevent unfair discrimination based on gender race and disability and promotes equality, human dignity and the use of hate speech and promote a culture of democracy in South Africa

Equality Courts

These are courts that were established as a direct result of PEPUDA and has a wide range of powers to provide effective relief to persons who are being subjected to unfair discrimination including persons with disabilities.

Through these courts, members of the disability community can challenge and put an end to unfair discrimination. Equality courts are situated in all provinces.

For more information on equality courts contact:

*The South African Human Rights Commission
(011) 484-8300*

Orchids and Onions

This section highlights good and bad practice when it comes to the universal designs of environments. You are welcome to submit photographs you might have for publication.



Ramps are essential for persons with disabilities to gain access building environments. These need to be constructed to a gradient of 1:12 The picture above clearly demonstrates how quick fix interventions doesn't lend itself to Universal Design



*Universal design promotes
integrated design*

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UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

- South Africa was among the first countries in the world to approve the UN Convention on Human Rights which came into effect on 3 May 2008.

- Article 9 of the UN Convention places the responsibility on member countries to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to offer access on an equal basis with others to the physical environment.

Included in this are transportation, information and communications (Information and communications technologies and systems) and to facilities and services in both urban and rural areas.

By November 2008 41 countries around the world approved the Convention and more recently Canada, who approved the convention just before the 2010 Winter Olympics that was held in that country.

There are 50 clauses in the UN convention with 9 of these speaking on the rights of persons with disabilities.

As members of our community we are entitled to having our rights respected just as everyone else has. NAA, together with members of SADA will continue to spread the message of accessibility to all sectors of society as was recently demonstrated at the South African Football Association (SAFA) head quarters.

South African National Building Regulations

Persons with Disabilities (PwD) needs certain facilities in the buildings where they live, work and have recreation in order to play their full role in society.

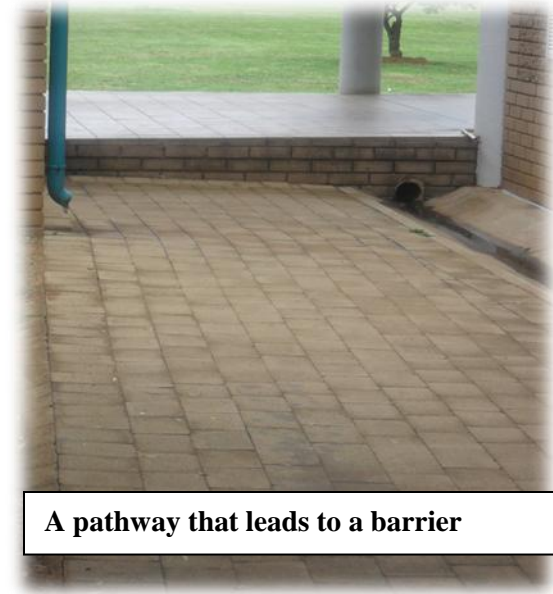
Legislation has been enacted in South Africa to enable this to happen. The South African National Building Regulations (SANS) is one such piece of legislation. Part "S" of the regulations, which came into effect on 1 October 2008, stipulates the minimum requirements for buildings and environments to be made accessible for persons with disabilities to access these environments.

There is a general belief among some property owners that buildings constructed before 1 September 1985 (the year the new building Standards Act commenced) are exempt from complying with SANS, but we believe that every effort should be made by owners to adhere to Part "S" of SANS.

Every time buildings are being renovated provides an opportunity for buildings to be made compliant.

We have observed over time, that buildings constructed in line with Universal Design principles, provide safe, comfortable and convenient access to non disabled persons as well as persons with disabilities.

Where I've been & What I've seen



A pathway that leads to a barrier



Confined workspace that doesn't allow for free movement of a wheelchair user

The above images demonstrates how the right to access and reasonable accommodation is compromised by poor design practices.

These are buildings used by government departments in the townships and are used daily by scores of persons with disabilities.

It is completely unacceptable for us to allow these situations to continue and it is time that as a sector, and as customers of government and the private business we demand our rights as citizens be respected.