

Don't Stop Playing!

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*“We don’t stop playing because we grow old;
we grow old because we stop playing.”*

– George Bernard Shaw

How can recreational facilities be made accessible? By providing an accessible route to that facility, and in some situations, ways to move into that play environment. The *International Building Code's* recreational requirements help persons with mobility impairments participate according to their abilities. It is not intended to change the nature of the game, but rather to allow for diversity and creativity.

In the 2015 IBC, recreational facilities will have their own section in Chapter 11, Section 1110. The Code Technologies Committee, through the work of a committee looking at coordination between the 2010 *ADA Standard for Accessible Design* and the IBC, developed proposals to coordinate the two documents. This was all part of continuing the work in the 2009 ICC A117.1 *Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities* (ICC A117.1). The 2009 edition of the ICC A117.1 is referenced in the 2012 and 2015 IBC; Chapter 11 includes all the technical criteria for how to make recreational facilities accessible.

The most significant change is a definition for the term "area of sports activity" in Chapter 2:

AREA OF SPORT ACTIVITY. *That portion of an indoor or outdoor space, where the play or practice of a sport occurs.*

The broad term, "area of sports activity", addresses indoor and outdoors courts, fields and other sport

areas. Examples are basketball and tennis courts; practice areas for dance or gymnastics; baseball, soccer and football fields; skating rinks; running tracks; or skateboard parks. The phrase "portion ... where the play or practice of a sport occurs," varies depending on the sport. Football fields include the playing field boundary lines, the end zones and the space between the boundary lines and safety border. Players may run or be pushed into this safety zone during play. In football, this safety zone is used as part of the playing field and is therefore included in the area of sports activity. Some of the areas listed under the recreational facilities specifically addressed in Section 1110 (i.e., bowling lanes, exercise equipment facilities, miniature golf and pools) also are considered areas of sports activity, but have additional requirements.

The overall basic scoping in the IBC requiring accessibility for recreational facilities is relatively unchanged. At least 25 percent of facilities in R-2, R-3 and R-4 occupancies must be accessible. If there are multiple buildings on a site, with each one or each group having its own facilities, this scoping would apply to each group. For example, if an apartment complex provides one pool and three tennis courts, this would mean the pool and at least one tennis court must be accessible. For all other occupancies, all recreational facilities must be accessible. However, if the Group R-2 or R-4 contains Accessible units, such as in college dormitories, then all recreational facilities must be accessible.

For areas of sports activity not specifically scoped with additional requirement in Section 1110, an

accessible route is required to the area of sports activity. The area itself is not subject to any other accessibility requirements such surface requirements (the playing surface can be made grass, sand or dirt), slope (the surface can be curved or sloped at any angle, such as a skateboard park) or subject to protruding object criteria (the net on a volleyball court can be elevated across the playing surface).

Section 1110 has additional criteria for specific types of facilities—exceptions for accessibility where added based on how the elements are used and safety concerns. The criteria are logical, which makes them very easy to follow. The next portion of this article will step through some of the scoping criteria. Each will indicate if the allowance was in previous editions or is new.



Remaining—Since bowling lanes repeat each other, only 5 percent, and their associated team or player seating areas, are required to be on an accessible route.

Remaining—Most court sports require switching sides during the game. An accessible route is required to both sides of the court without having to leave the immediate area.



Remaining—Boxing and wrestling rings are raised to allow for a line of sight from the audience to the ring—similar to a stage.

These unique types of facilities are not required to be on an accessible route or be accessible.

Remaining—Raised areas used solely for refereeing, judging or scoring are not required to be accessible or be on an accessible route.

New—Animal containment areas not public use areas are not required to be accessible. ‘Public use area’ is defined as ‘...made available to the general public’. There may be areas of a facility, such as a horse riding arena, where portions of the facility are not open to the general public (i.e., horse stalls and corrals). Those areas are not required to be accessible or be on an accessible route. Areas such as the riding arena would have to be on an accessible route. The arena itself could be a dirt floor.

New—Amusement rides that move a person through a fixed course and along a specific route are required to be accessible to the extent specified. Typical examples would be a roller coaster, a Ferris wheel, a ride that moves the rider along to view different scenes (i.e., omnimover), swing or pendulum rides. There is an exception for these types of rides that are mobile or portable. There are also types of rides that do not have a fixed course. For example, the portable amusement rides that come in



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each year for state or county fairs are not required to be accessible. In an amusement park, rides such as bumper cars do not move along a fixed course. These rides should have an entrance on an accessible route, but they are not required to provide additional accessible features. Scoped rides need a route to the load and unload areas, as well as either a way for a person to transfer from their wheelchair to a seat on the ride, or to move the wheelchair onto the ride. Practically speaking, you also need a place to leave the wheelchair while someone is on the ride. Rides specifically designed for children or rides that do not have seats, are not required to provide this transfer capability.

New—Boat piers serving boat slips or launch ramps are required to be part of an accessible route and to have some locations allowing for transfer from the pier to a boat. The number of transfer locations depends on the type and number of slips provided. The ICC A117.1 standard allows for locations where the ramp between the land elevation and the water elevation vary greatly because of tides or topography. The latter also applies to a new provision for fishing piers and platforms also required on an accessible route.



New—Where exercise equipment is provided, an accessible route is required to at least one of each type of machine provided. There are no requirements to provide transfer devices or to change the nature of the equipment itself. (ICC A117.1 has a specific exception for operable parts on exercise equipment.) Access to exercise equipment is necessary for persons who are recovering from a temporary disability and for persons with disabilities who need to maintain the muscles they use to operate their



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equipment. Looking at that group of muscles the equipment exercises is a clue to determine different types.

New—Undulating or sloped miniature golf playing surfaces, changes in level, shooting through an object with a surprise as to where it comes out, all help make the game interesting. Half of the holes provided must be on an accessible route and meet the technical criteria in the ICC A117.1.



The standard allows for the accessible route to be on the playing surface or adjacent where a certain reach can be maintained. Limited curbs are permitted across the route to keep the ball in play.

So a person does not have to move through other holes that may be in play, the accessible route must not travel through non-accessible holes. There can be one break in the route for the accessible holes, as long as the last hole is included in the route. Traditionally, that is the hole where you can shoot to win a free game or a prize. For example, in an 18-hole course, you could make holes 1 through 5 and 15 through 18 the accessible holes.

New—Swimming pools are required to have a route to them and a route into the water. The ICC A117.1 offers several different options for access into the water depending on the type and size of the pool. There is an exception for the route into the water for swimming pools serving Type A and Type B dwelling units in Groups R-2, R-3 and R-4.



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Group R-2 with Accessible units, such as dormitories, cannot use this exception.

When hot tubs are grouped, 5 percent must be accessible. Per ICC A117.1, the accessible hot tub can use a pool lift or a transfer wall to allow access into the water.

Raised diving boards, diving platforms and water slides are not required to be accessible. When the swimming pool at the bottom is only for the slide, swimmers are not permitted there for safety reasons. That catch pool is not required to have an accessible route into the water.

New—There are a variety of indoor and outdoor shooting facilities offering target practice. Typically, this is practice for shooting bows and arrows, handguns, rifles or shotguns, and where the participants aim at fixed targets, decoys or clay pigeons. An accessible route is required to at least 5 percent of the firing positions at each type of arrangement provided.



There are technical criteria of golf courses and playgrounds in the ICC A117.1. The IBC does not include any specific exceptions or allowances for these types of recreational facilities.

Facilities supporting recreational facilities—such as parking lots, concessions stands, locker/bathrooms, team and player and viewer seating—must be accessible per the scoping requirements through Chapter 11 of the IBC.

We all need places to live, work and play. The intent of the provisions are to allow for equal access for all persons to participate to the best of their abilities. **bsj**

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