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When School is Out ... Accessibility Upgrades Are In *Summer off-season is a perfect time to upgrade building entrances and doors*

August 9, 2024—Another summer means more opportunities for school districts to improve physical accessibility for students, staff, and visitors. Summertime is when a lot of upgrades happen to school buildings, so education can begin seamlessly and without distractions come fall. The [American Association of Automatic Door Manufacturers](#) encourages schools to take advantage of this downtime to make entrances and exits more accessible to constituents who require mobility aids.



A [U.S. General Accounting Office report](#) from 2020 (the most recent figures available) revealed that two-thirds of school districts had facilities with physical barriers that may limit access.

The requirements that schools must meet to ensure physical accessibility depend on a building or addition's date of construction – meaning accommodations typically must be part of any new construction. Therefore, schools should seize the opportunity of their “off-season” to remedy any accessibility shortcomings.

There are federal laws that govern access to school buildings. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) prohibits discrimination based on disability in any program or activity operated by recipients of federal funds – and that covers most public school districts. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) prohibits discrimination based on disability in “places of public accommodation.”

Both add up to mean that schools have a legal responsibility to ensure that students and others with disabilities (like staff and parents of students) are able to access programs or activities. This basically prohibits physically inaccessible facilities, and covers academic buildings, athletic facilities, restrooms, walkways, and even parking spaces.

It has long been concerning to the automatic door industry that the ADA doesn't mandate automatic doors to qualify a building as “accessible.” ADA only requires that doorways be 32 inches wide and have “maneuvering clearance” for a wheelchair user to open the door and roll through (and even this is only required on 60% of a building's entrances).

There are cost-effective ways to add the accessibility and convenience of automatic doors to any renovation project. Automatic doors are much more economical than some people believe, especially when factoring in such things as life cycle costing, energy savings, and lower-cost automatic door

options. Automatic doors that are properly maintained and serviced run smoothly for years and virtually pay for themselves in terms of convenience and energy savings. Automatic doors are manufactured to the highest standards for quality and safety, ensuring minimal maintenance requirements and making them incredibly easy to own, use and maintain.

For more information about AAADM, visit <https://www.aaadm.com/>.

About AAADM

The American Association of Automatic Door Manufacturers (AAADM) is a trade association of manufacturers of automatic pedestrian door systems. AAADM was founded in 1994 with the following mission: to increase awareness of automatic doors and accessibility needs; to increase education, training and professionalism among installers and service providers; and to generally promote the safe use of automatic doors. Each year on March 19, AAADM celebrates National Automatic Door Day to raise awareness about the many benefits of automatic doors, including providing access to those with physical challenges and helping to prevent germs by eliminating the need to touch door handles. www.aaadm.com.

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