

Type III Ramp-Equipped Vehicles: Requirements and Considerations

Effective May 2024, wheelchair vans are able to be used for pupil transportation in Iowa. Information relating to statutory references and equipment requirements are provided below. Word choice in the information below was intentional, particularly when using “shall” as a means of indicating a mandatory requirement.

Statutory References

- Requirements for wheelchair vans are defined in [Iowa Administrative Code r. 281–44 School Buses](#). 44.5(1)“c”(3) Wheelchair ramps are allowed to be added to the passenger side of the vehicle only and will comply with all applicable FMVSS and ADA requirements. When wheelchair ramps are added, the vehicle must also be equipped with the appropriate wheelchair securement system, which must also meet all applicable FMVSS and ADA requirements.

Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards

- Prior to any modifications, the original vehicle must meet all [Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards \(FMVSS\)](#). After the vehicle is modified for wheelchair accessibility, it is critical to confirm that the vehicle still meets all FMVSS safety standards.

Americans with Disabilities Act

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) student transportation requirements pursuant to [49 CFR § 38.21-38.39](#) are listed below.
 - Seat belt and shoulder harness.** For each wheelchair or mobility aid securement device provided, a passenger seat belt and shoulder harness, complying with all applicable provisions of [49 CFR Part 571](#), shall also be provided for use by wheelchair or mobility aid users. Such seat belts and shoulder harnesses shall not be used in lieu of a device which secures the wheelchair or mobility aid itself.
 - Design load.** Ramps 30 inches or longer shall support a load of 600 pounds, placed at the centroid of the ramp distributed over an area of 26 inches by 26 inches, with a safety factor of at least 3 based on the ultimate strength of the material. Ramps shorter than 30 inches shall support a load of 300 pounds.
 - Ramp surface.** The ramp surface shall be continuous and slip resistant; shall not have protrusions from the surface greater than 1/4 inch high; shall have a clear width of 30 inches; and shall accommodate both four-wheel and three-wheel mobility aids.
 - Ramp barriers.** Each side of the ramp shall have barriers at least 2 inches high to prevent mobility aid wheels from slipping off.
 - Door height.** For vehicles in excess of 22 feet in length, the overhead clearance between the top of the door opening and the raised lift platform, or highest point of a ramp, shall be a minimum of 68 inches. For vehicles of 22 feet in length or less, the overhead clearance between the top of the door opening and the raised lift platform, or highest point of a ramp, shall be a minimum of 56 inches.
 - Lighting.** Any stepwell or doorway immediately adjacent to the driver shall have, when the door is open, at least 2 foot-candles of illumination measured on the step tread or lift platform. Other stepwells and doorways, including doorways in which lifts or ramps are installed, shall have, at all times, at least 2 foot-candles of illumination measured on the step tread, or lift or ramp, when deployed at the vehicle floor level. The vehicle doorways, including doorways in which lifts or ramps are installed, shall have outside light(s) which, when the door is open, provide at least 1 foot-candle of illumination on the street surface for a distance 3 feet (915 mm) perpendicular to the bottom step tread or lift outer edge. Such light(s) shall be shielded to protect the eyes of entering and exiting passengers.
 - Access.** All vehicles shall provide a level-change mechanism or boarding device (e.g., lift or ramp) and sufficient clearances to permit a wheelchair or other mobility aid user to reach a securement location.

Contact

Additional questions regarding wheelchair accessible Type III vehicles may be directed to the transportation team members below.

Tom Simpson, State Director for Pupil Transportation: tom.simpson@iowa.gov or 515-336-3965

Joe Funk, Southeast Region Bus Inspector: joe.funk@iowa.gov or 515-669-4987

Chris Errthum, Northeast Region Bus Inspector: chris.errthum@iowa.gov or 515-669-4994

Codie Kellen, Western Region Bus Inspector: codie.kellen@iowa.gov or 515-326-1022