



Disabled doesn't mean Unable

Stamping Out Barriers

Section 508 and the Postal Service

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“Our employees are our greatest asset! Our customers are our greatest partners! We must ensure that there are no obstacles for our employees prohibiting them from working to the best of their ability, and we must ensure there are no barriers for our customers when conducting business with the Postal Service. This is what our commitment to Section 508 is all about — opening doors, removing obstacles and providing access to all postal services. The Postal Service is committed to complying with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act — it makes good business sense and it's the right thing to do.”

— Robert Otto, Vice President, Chief Technology Officer

Background

Since its beginning, the Postal Service's mission has been to bind together a diverse and far-reaching nation by efficiently, reliably, and promptly delivering the correspondence and communications of its people. Today, Electronic and Information Technology (EIT) plays a vital role in fostering this mission. Complying with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act further enhances the Postal Service's mission by addressing accessibility issues for persons with disabilities.

What The Law Says

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act is a law that requires federal agencies, including the Postal Service, to procure EIT that is accessible to persons with disabilities. According to Section 508, all EIT equipment and systems procured on or after June 21, 2001, must comply with standards written by the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board). These standards, published December 21, 2000, in the *Federal Register*, cover such technologies as Web pages, software applications, computers, self-contained kiosks, copiers, multimedia, and telecommunications systems.

Our Philosophy

The Postal Service has a history of eliminating barriers, improving access, and making it easier for our customers and employees to do business with us. This is true whether the barrier to be overcome is a physical barrier to a postal facility or an electronic barrier to an information system.

The Future

- June 21, 2001, was just the beginning. The Postal Service remains committed to providing all its customers and employees with everything they need to be able to have prompt, reliable, and efficient access to Postal Service electronic and information technology. We are designing all of our future business systems with accessibility in mind.
- The bottom line: The Postal Service is making Section 508 compliance just a normal way of conducting business to bind together our nation in the twenty-first century.

Key Accomplishments

In only 3 years, the Postal Service has moved Section 508 compliance into its everyday business routine. From laying the foundation in corporate policies, we have made great strides as we continue to learn what it means to provide postal services to *all* people. Here's what we have done so far:

- Published Handbook AS-508, which provides our guiding principles for implementing the Access Board standards and identifies roles and responsibilities, procurement processes, and Web accessibility standards.
- Updated our *Purchasing Manual* to specify how the Postal Service buys accessible electronic and information technology and added the requirement that any new purchases of EIT must include provisions to comply with Section 508.

Section 508: It's not just the law; it's the right thing to do!

- Revised customer and employee complaint policies and complaint handling processes to address accessibility issues triggered by Section 508.
- Incorporated Section 508 standards in more than 500 Postal Service internal and external Web sites.
- Integrated Section 508 standards into the business solutions development process.
- Educated the Postal Service community — particularly those who develop and procure EIT — about Section 508.
- Informed industry and advocacy groups of the Postal Service’s Section 508 compliance efforts.
- Improved TTY access for customers calling the 1-800-ASK-USPS service: The TTY number is 1-877-877-7833.
- Included captioning on all *new* Postal Service videos.
- Established an ongoing program to educate Postal Service employees and partners on Section 508 efforts.

For more information about the Postal Service and Section 508, go to www.usps.com and search under “Section 508.”