

721—21.50(49) Polling place accessibility standards.

21.50(1) *Inspection required.* Before any building may be designated for use as a polling place, the county commissioner of elections or the commissioner's designee shall inspect the building to determine whether it is accessible to persons with disabilities.

21.50(2) *Frequency of inspection.* Polling places that have been inspected using the Polling Place Accessibility Survey Form prescribed in subrule 21.50(4) shall be reinspected if structural changes are made to the building or if the location of the polling place inside the building is changed.

21.50(3) *Review of accessibility.* Not less than 90 days before each primary election, the commissioner shall determine whether each polling place needs to be reinspected.

21.50(4) *Standards for determining polling place accessibility.* The survey form available on the state commissioner's website titled "Polling Place Accessibility Survey" shall be used to evaluate polling places for accessibility to persons with disabilities.

The term "off-street parking" used in the polling place accessibility survey means parking places in lots separated from the street and includes angle parking along the street if the accessible route from the parking place to the polling place is entirely out of the path of traffic. Parking arrangements that require either the driver or passengers of the vehicle to go into the traveled part of the street are not accessible.

An access aisle at street level that is at least 60 inches wide and the same length as each accessible parking space shall be provided. An accessible public sidewalk curb ramp shall connect the access aisle to the continuous passage to the polling place. At least one parking place shall be van-accessible with a 96-inch access aisle connected to the continuous passage to the polling place by an accessible public sidewalk curb ramp. Two accessible parking spaces may share a common access aisle.

21.50(5) *Temporary waiver of accessibility requirements.* Notwithstanding the waiver provisions of 721—Chapter 10, if the county commissioner is unable to provide an accessible polling place for any precinct, the commissioner shall apply for a temporary waiver of accessibility requirements pursuant to this subrule. Applications shall be filed with the secretary of state not later than 60 days before the date of any scheduled election. If a waiver is granted, it shall be valid for two years from the date of approval by the secretary of state.

a. Each application shall include the following documents:

(1) Application for Temporary Waiver of Accessibility Requirements.

(2) A copy of the Polling Place Accessibility Survey Form for the polling place to be used.

(3) A copy of the Polling Place Accessibility Survey Form for any other buildings that were surveyed and rejected as possible polling place sites for the precinct.

b. If an accessible place becomes available at least 30 days before an election, the commissioner shall change polling places and shall notify the secretary of state. The notice shall include a copy of the Polling Place Accessibility Survey Form for the new polling place.

21.50(6) *Emergency waivers.* During the 60 days preceding an election, if a polling place becomes unavailable for use due to fire, flood, or changes made to the building, or for other reasons, the commissioner must apply for an emergency waiver of accessibility requirements in order to move the polling place to an inaccessible building. Emergency waiver applications must be filed with the secretary of state as soon as possible before election day. To apply for an emergency waiver, the commissioner shall send the following documents:

a. Application for Temporary Waiver of Accessibility Requirements.

b. A copy of the Polling Place Accessibility Survey Form for the polling place selected.

c. A copy of the Polling Place Accessibility Survey Form for any other buildings that were surveyed and rejected as possible polling place sites for this precinct (if any).

21.50(7) *Application form.* The form posted on the state commissioner's website titled "Temporary Waiver of Accessibility Requirements" shall be used to apply for a temporary waiver of accessibility requirements.

21.50(8) *Evaluation of waivers.* When the secretary of state receives waiver applications, the applications shall be reviewed carefully. A response shall be sent to the commissioner within one week by email or by fax to notify the commissioner when the waiver request was received and whether additional information is needed.

21.50(9) *Granting waivers.* If the secretary of state determines from the documents filed with the waiver request that conditions justify the use of a polling place that does not meet accessibility standards, the secretary of state shall grant the waiver of accessibility requirements. If the secretary of state determines from the documents filed with the waiver request that all potential polling places have been surveyed and no accessible place is available, and the available building cannot be made temporarily accessible, the waiver shall be granted.

21.50(10) *Notice required.* Each notice of election published pursuant to Iowa Code section 49.53 shall clearly describe which polling places are inaccessible. The notice shall include a description of the services available to persons with disabilities who live in precincts with inaccessible polling places. The notice shall be in substantially the following form:

Any voter who is physically unable to enter a polling place has the right to vote in the voter's vehicle. For further information, please contact the county auditor's office at the telephone number or email address listed below:

Telephone: _____ Email address: _____.

For TTY access, dial 711 + [auditor's office number].

21.50(11) *Denial of waiver requests.* The secretary of state shall review each waiver request. The secretary of state shall consider the totality of the circumstances as shown by the information on the waiver request, information contained in previous applications for waivers for the same precinct and for other precincts in the county, and other relevant available information. The waiver request may be denied if it appears that the commissioner has not made a good-faith effort to find an accessible polling place. If the waiver request is denied, the secretary of state shall notify the commissioner in writing of the reason for denying the request.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code section 49.21.

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