

Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility in India 2021

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In news– The Central Public Works Department (CPWD) has released revised Universal Accessibility guidelines recently.

About Universal Accessibility guidelines-

- The guidelines are a **revision of the Harmonised Guidelines and Space Standards for Barrier-Free Built Environment for Persons with Disabilities (PWD) and Elderly Persons released by the CPWD in February 2016.**
- These guidelines aim to sensitize, guide and facilitate the approach towards implementing accessibility in all facets of the built environment and beyond.
- **It intends to build a focus towards creation of inclusive environments for all** through responding to the wide ranging accessibility needs of persons with disabilities, elderly, women, children and all others through the universal design approach.
- **Drafted by a team of the Indian Institute of Technology-Roorkee and the National Institute of Urban Affairs of the MoHUA**, the revised guidelines aim to give a holistic approach.
- The new guidelines and standards complement the parallel existence of National Building Code 2016, Model Building Bye Laws 2020 and other relevant codes while adhering to the mandates of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.
- The guidelines provide the gradient and length of ramps – for example, for a length of six metres, the gradient should be 1:12.
- **It calls for accessibility symbols for PwD, family-friendly facilities and transgender to be inclusively**

incorporated among the symbols for other user groups.

- The guidelines are not just for PwD, but for State governments, government departments and the private sector, as well as for reference by architecture and planning institutes.

Central Public Works Department (CPWD)-

- CPWD works under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs).
- It deals with buildings, roads, bridges, flyovers, complicated structures like stadiums, auditoriums, laboratories, bunkers, border fencing, border roads (hill roads), etc.
- **It came into existence in July 1854 when Lord Dalhousie established a central agency** for execution of public works and set up Ajmer Provincial Division.
- The Director General of CPWD functions as Technical Advisor to the Government of India and is consulted in various technical matters relating to construction and maintenance.
- The Ministry of External Affairs consults CPWD with regard to construction and maintenance of the Embassy buildings abroad.

Further reading:
<https://journalsofindia.com/right-of-persons-with-disabilities-act-2016/>