



# The Commercial Inspector

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## ask the inspector

**Q. What kinds of safety issues will an inspector look for in my commercial building? Will he check for ADA compliance?**

A. Your commercial property inspector typically will document the presence of handicap-accessible parking stalls, curb ramps, elevators, grab rails and restroom fixtures. Obvious obstructions also may be documented — for instance, stairs leading to a building without a ramp or a narrow entry door.



Your inspector most likely won't conduct a formal assessment for complete compliance with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA); however, he/she should complete a visual review of the property and assess the areas considered to be public accommodations based on the requirements of Title III of the ADA. Buildings constructed after Jan. 26, 1992, and considered to be places of public accommodations must remove architectural and communication barriers that are considered readily achievable in accordance with the resources available to building ownership. This is intended to provide disabled people with

## snapshots from the field

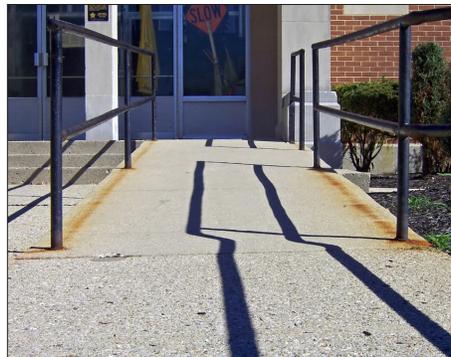
What Is This Picture?



- A ) An island surrounded by a lake
- B ) A water-covered road with a bump in the pavement
- C ) An exclusive aerial shot from the set of the next Star Wars movie
- D ) A blister on a roof of melting snow

*( answer on the back )*

accommodations and access equal or similar to those available to the general public.



If you are leasing a commercial business space, you should be aware that tenants are usually responsible for reviewing and making ADA-compliant accommodations in their

leased areas.

The ADA was enacted as a guideline for designing new buildings and was not necessarily intended to serve as a regulation for buildings constructed prior to January 1992. Accommodations or upgrades may or may not be mandated on buildings constructed earlier. The extent of any upgrade requirements is determined by the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ).

Often, a commercial building inspection report will include a statement such as the following:

*It appears through the visual assessment that the public accommodations of the property are in general compliance with Title III requirements. An ADA compliance assessment was not completed in this inspection.*



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## for your information

### Bituminous Fiber Pipe

Bituminous fiber pipe, also called no-corrode or black pipe, is made up of a combination of cellulose (wood fibers) and asbestos fibers saturated with a bituminous (coal-tar) compound. Bituminous fiber pipe was manufactured with either a homogenous wall or a multiple-ply laminated wall. The joints are made with couplings of similar material, using no gaskets or joint sealant. Therefore, the pipe is susceptible to root intrusion. Orangeburg was a brand of bituminous pipe

commonly used for electrical conduit and sewer lines.

In the late 1960s and 1970s PVC pipe ended the bituminous fiber pipe boom and became the product of choice because it was cheaper and held up better. Because bituminous fiber pipe is used predominantly in underground applications, it is nearly impossible to know if it was used for a city's main sewer lines.

There are several ways to determine whether bituminous fiber pipe is present, but all involve contact with the piping itself. A video scan of the pipe may be sufficient to identify the type of pipe, or a mechanical cutter may be inserted to clean the line and might bring evidence of the piping materials used. Digging down to the pipe will also give a positive identification of the pipe.

## maintenance matters

### Don't Let Ceiling Stains Stick Around

If you notice stains on the ceilings of your commercial building, they likely signal a leak, maybe from winter's snow melting or rain damage. There's no better time than now to fix the cause of these unsightly stains, and the repair will probably cost less than the damage that may ensue if the leak persists.



The first step is to find out what caused the stain — it was likely a leaky roof or pipe — and fix the problem. Otherwise, once you cover the ceiling stain, you'll just wind up with another one in its place. As soon as possible, call a certified roofing contractor or plumber to fix the problem. After the leak is fixed, the next step is to repair or replace the areas in the ceiling that were damaged.

## Did You Know?

### Grading Matters for Commercial Property

Keeping a positive grade around the perimeter of a building is very important. A positive slope away from the building allows water to run away from the building rather than toward the building. Water entering a basement or crawl space, or seeping underneath a slab, can cause foundation and structural issues over time. If concrete is not sloped properly away from a building water, then intrusion can cause hazards to persons entering the building..

## Snapshots from the field

*The correct answer is D. The photo shows snow melting around a blister that has formed on a roof. This could potentially cause a leak in the roof, leading to water damage.*