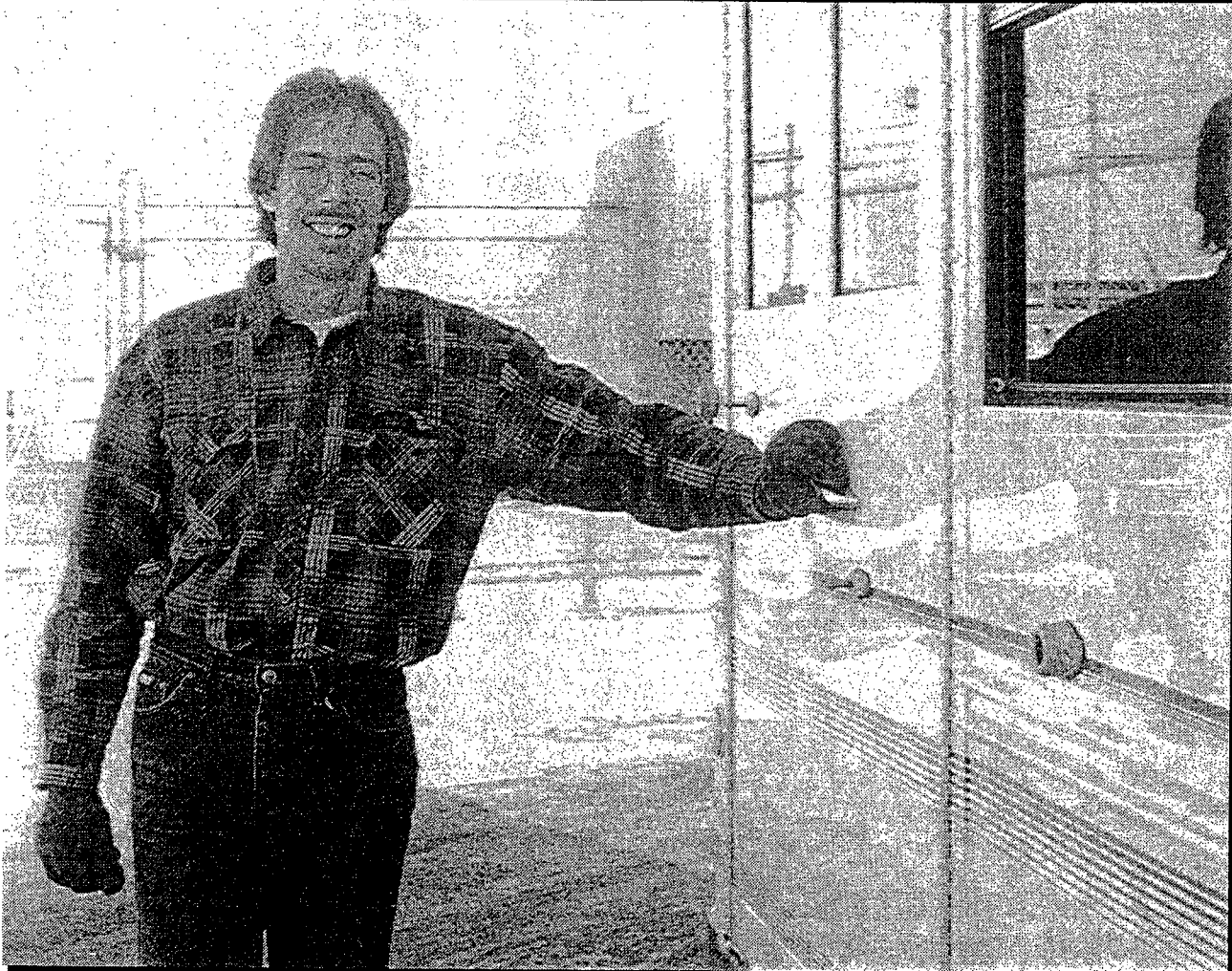


# A Guide For Drivers of Seniors and Persons With Disabilities



Although this document was published a number of years ago, its content is still current and relevant. For further information, please contact:

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# This is Your Guide

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This guide was prepared in response to requests from drivers of seniors and persons with disabilities, particularly those from rural and smaller centres, where formal driver training programs are not always available. The contents were based on requests drivers made in an informal survey conducted by Alberta Transportation and Utilities. Much of the guide is an updated version of the six-module *Training Manual for Drivers of the Disabled in Alberta* produced a number of years ago by the former Alberta Motor Vehicles Division. The guide is a project of AT&U's Advisory Committee on Barrier-Free Transportation and is part of the department's Barrier-Free Transportation initiative. The Advisory Committee includes representatives from service providers and consumers.

Drivers like you and people with knowledge about the needs of persons with disabilities reviewed the guide before publication. Based on their advice, the guide is intended to be just that -- a guide. It is definitely not a replacement for training or common sense.

While many people contributed to the production of this manual, AT&U would particularly like to acknowledge the help of Sandee Paulgaard and Wendy Vercholuk of Edmonton Transit (DATS). Valuable contributions were also made by Murray Sherwin, Rose City Handi Van, Camrose; Ken Blampied, Lethbridge Handi-Bus Association; Peter Charuk, Calgary Handi-Bus Association; Jane Herrmann, Capital Care Dickensfield; Carla Butt, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital; and Diane Earl, Premier's Council on the Status of Persons With Disabilities.

Note: The information for Guide for Drivers of Seniors and Persons With Disabilities was gathered from a number of sources and organizations. No responsibility will be assumed by the department of Transportation & Utilities for the correctness or completeness of the information contained in the guide, and should such information be found to be incorrect or incomplete, no claim may be made against the department.



# 1 The Right Attitude: Customer Service

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A good driver needs knowledge, skill, experience and the right attitude. Whether you drive a school bus, taxi, or a handi-van for persons with special needs, the right attitude is based on professionalism and customer service.

Good customer service doesn't happen by accident. It comes from knowing your passengers, knowing your job and knowing yourself.

This guide is a tool to help you achieve excellence in customer service. Many of the topics came from your suggestions in a survey conducted by Alberta Transportation and Utilities (AT&U). Drivers, owners and passengers told us that they wanted to know more about communications, special needs, and techniques and procedures to ensure passenger comfort and safety.

The best place to begin your training is to take an attitude check. What are *your* attitudes towards persons with disabilities? Take a look at any stereotypes you might hold. What exactly do you know about different disabilities and how they can affect people?

If you are a driver with the right attitude, you will see your passengers as people first and foremost. Remember, too, that your attitude and commitment to customer service will convey an image to your community and your passengers. It's up to you to make that image one of a caring professional.

One final point. Like your colleagues in the health care field, you may learn or overhear a great deal of personal information about your passengers on the job. To protect their

privacy, you must be discreet and keep this information to yourself, on the bus or off.

## 1.1 Know Your Customers

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Any successful business or operation rests on a thorough knowledge of its customers. As a driver of a handi-van or bus, your business is no different. Your passengers are your customers, and you must know their needs to do your job with confidence and competence.

To know your passengers, you should be aware of different disabilities and how they can affect people. These facts will determine how you drive, the kind of assistance your passengers may require in getting on or off the vehicle, and the measures required to ensure their safety enroute.

Appendix A - Disability Awareness provides details you will find helpful to serve your passengers better. But the best way to gather the information you need is very simple: Just *ask*.

Ask your passengers how you can best assist them. Inform them of your actions before you take them, and check if that is the best approach. Keep asking until you get it right.

Interestingly enough, the AT&U survey found that drivers want to know more about their passengers, and passengers want their drivers to know more about them. Drivers sometimes hesitate to ask, and passengers don't always volunteer details out of shyness or embarrassment.

With unfailing courtesy, carry out your customer research and ask your passengers what they need. Do NOT ask: "What is wrong with you?"

## 1.2 Just Ask: Communicating With Your Passengers \_\_\_\_\_

Drivers, owners and passengers told us that communication is their number one priority. Two simple rules: see the person first, not the disability, and never assume anything. The same disability can affect people in different ways at different times. Above all, be patient and courteous, and understanding of your passengers' needs.

The Handi-Bus Operator Handbook published in 1995 by the Calgary Handi-Bus Association offers a formula for customer satisfaction in section 3.1 Communication Skills.

**“Attitude + Skill + Knowledge (ASK) =  
Customer Satisfaction”**

In other words, **ASK** your customers what you need to know. The handbook also includes the following general guidelines to use in working successfully with your customers. They are reprinted here with minor changes with the kind permission of the Calgary Handi-Bus Association:

- ♦ **Take time to discover each person's method of communicating.** Some people, for example, may respond only in writing or by sign language. The general rule is to ask if there is anything you need to know and to inform the person what you are doing before you do it.
- ♦ **Have respect when talking with a person who has a disability.** Speak directly to that person and try to attract their visual and hearing attention at the same time. Do not overlook the person with a disability by asking a companion for information, as if the person was not present.

- ♦ **Call a person by their first name only when extending that familiarity to all others present.** Some passengers may not wish to be addressed by their first name.
- ♦ **Be patient, attentive and encouraging when talking to a person who has difficulty speaking.** Do not correct or speak for the person. When necessary ask short, simple questions that require short answers, a nod or shake of the head. Speak clearly in a natural tone of voice.
- ♦ **Listen carefully and repeat words you have understood.** If you have not understood something, say so. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Repeat what you do understand. The person's reactions will guide you to understanding. You may need to repeat several times what you are trying to communicate. Try to determine whether the person has understood you.
- ♦ **Be patient and realize that it might take extra time for a person with a disability to get things done or said.** Let the other person set the pace.
- ♦ **When talking with a person using a wheelchair or mobility aid for any significant period of time, place yourself in front of them, at their eye level, to spare both of you discomfort.**
- ♦ **Never assist a person using a wheelchair or mobility aid without first telling them who you are and what you are doing.** Even if you are aware of what must be done and can easily see what is going on, do not assume that the other person also knows.

Often they are not aware because they look forward and can be surprised by sudden movements.

- ♦ **Offer ambulatory people assistance when it looks as though it might be needed, but wait until your offer is accepted before you help.** Listen to any instructions the person may want to give. Do not insist on helping if the person refuses help, but stay close by and be ready to assist if necessary.
- ♦ **Do not take wheelchairs, crutches or other mobility devices away from passengers unless they have indicated that they want them out of the way.** It is important that the passenger is settled before moving the mobility device.
- ♦ **When assisting passengers with vision impairment, do not grab them.** Identify yourself verbally, then offer to help. If the person carries a cane in the right hand, you should offer your right arm so he or she may hold it with their left hand. Let individuals allow you to guide them. Do not rush. Keep the person informed about where you are. Tell your passengers with visual impairments about starts and stops, turns, steps and any other details of the route. Be sure to let them know when you are leaving them. Do not touch or in any way distract a guide dog, unless you have the passenger's permission.
- ♦ **When assisting passengers with hearing impairment, you should gesture with your hand or touch them lightly to get their attention.** Look directly at the person when you are speaking, because some hearing impaired people need to see your mouth to lip read. Speak slowly, clearly and

expressively. Speaking loudly may help some, but not all; keep their privacy in mind. Remember that many people with a hearing impairment also do not speak. Sometimes writing things down on paper is the best solution. Remember to carry a pen and paper with you for this purpose.

- ♦ **When giving assistance to a person with a disability, take into account conditions such as rain, ice, wind, inclines, steps, gravel, mud, etc.**

### 1.3 Words With Dignity \_\_\_\_\_

The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons With Disabilities has provided the following list of "words with dignity" to help you in communicating with your passengers:

<u>Instead of . . .</u>	<u>Use . . .</u>
Disabled/Invalid _____	<i>Person with a disability</i>
Crippled by, afflicted with, suffers from . . .	<i>Person who has . . . or Person with. . .</i>
Lame _____	<i>Limited mobility</i>
Confined, bound, restricted or dependent on a wheelchair _____	<i>Wheelchair user</i>
Person in a wheelchair _____	<i>Person using a wheelchair</i>
Normal _____	<i>Able-bodied or non-disabled</i>
Victim, sufferer, cripple _____	<i>Person with a disability</i>
Deaf and dumb, deaf mute _____	<i>Person with hearing and/or speech impairment; or person who is deaf</i>
Retarded, mentally retarded _____	<i>Person with a developmental disability</i>
Spastic (as a noun) _____	<i>Person with Cerebral Palsy</i>
Deformed, congenital defect _____	<i>A person born with. . .</i>
Physically challenged _____	<i>Person with a disability</i>

## 1.4 Passenger Comfort \_\_\_\_\_

Passenger comfort must be uppermost in the minds of drivers of persons with disabilities. A draft, for example, or a hot van on a summer's day can have major effects on some passengers with disabilities. Always be alert and sensitive to the environmental conditions that can affect your passengers' comfort. Check occasionally to ask if your passengers are comfortable. Here are some tips to get you started:

- ♦ **Watch the temperature.** Make it your business to know where the warmer and cooler spots are in the vehicle when the heater or air conditioner is on, the location of any drafts, and where the drafts go when the door is opened. Inform passengers of the warm and cool spots to help them decide where to be seated. The rear of the vehicle is usually much warmer than the front. Use weatherstripping to cut down on drafts.
- ♦ **Keep the season in mind.** In the winter, open the bus doors only when necessary. In the summer, keep them open as much as possible, unless you have air conditioning.
- ♦ **Maintain good air quality.** Smoking should not be permitted, particularly for the sake of passengers who might have respiratory problems. With rear loaders, it is a good idea to shut off the engine at pick-up and drop-off points to keep hazardous and irritating exhaust gases out of the bus. The engines of side loaders do not necessarily have to be turned off as the exhaust vents on the side of the bus away from the door.

In wintertime, batteries can be depleted if you do not leave the engine running,

particularly if the lift operates with the battery as the power source. In all seasons, keep the vehicle well ventilated, but remember to ask before opening any windows.

- ♦ **Watch your radio dial.** Consider your passengers when selecting a radio station and setting the volume.

## 1.5 Driving Tips \_\_\_\_\_

Your driving patterns have a major impact on passenger comfort. Jerky, bumpy rides can create excruciating pain for many passengers and may jeopardize their safety. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- ♦ Drive as smoothly as possible, particularly when starting or stopping. Avoid unnecessary lane changes.
- ♦ Watch those bumps and potholes. Slow down, and drive gently over them. If possible, avoid bumpy routes.
- ♦ Ease around corners slowly and smoothly. People who have difficulties with balance are particularly vulnerable to sudden changes of direction or movement.

## 1.6 A Word About Maintenance \_\_\_\_\_

That word is: prevention. As a driver of persons with disabilities, it is particularly important that your vehicle is regularly and well maintained. Your passengers could be in serious danger if your bus breaks down on a country road in the winter, to use just one example. For further details, refer to Alberta Regulation 428/91, the Commercial Bus Inspection, Equipment and Safety Regulation, Alberta Motor Transport Act. Copies of the

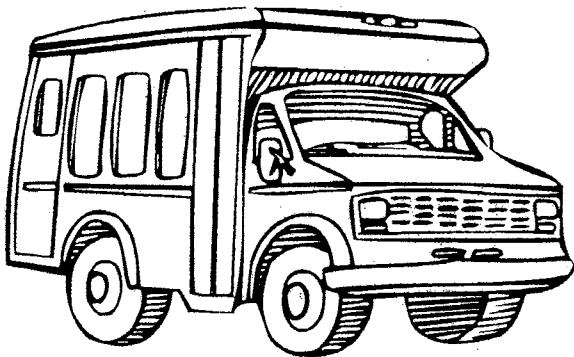
regulation are available from Queen's Printer.

## 1.7 Before You Leave:

### The Pre-Trip Inspection

The same word - prevention - is the point behind the five-minute pre-trip inspection you should take before you leave on your route each day. It's far easier and safer to prevent a problem from occurring than to deal with it after the fact.

Vehicles should be checked before being placed in service, or following the day's run. All faulty or improperly functioning equipment should be reported, in writing, to the proper authorities so that maintenance personnel are promptly notified, and the problem can be repaired immediately.



#### Exterior/Interior Safety Checklist

- |                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ✓ All Windows             | ✓ Fuel                         |
| ✓ Windshield/Wipers       | ✓ Steering Wheel               |
| ✓ All Mirrors             | ✓ Horn                         |
| ✓ Signals/Headlights      | ✓ Defroster                    |
| ✓ All Warning Lights      | ✓ Brakes/Parking Brakes        |
| ✓ All Interior Lights     | ✓ Clutch (Standard)            |
| ✓ Tailpipe/Exhaust System | ✓ All Safety Restraint Systems |
| ✓ Wheels/Tires            | ✓ All Fuses                    |
| ✓ All Doors               | ✓ All Emergency Equipment      |
| ✓ Ramp/Lift               | ✓ Mobility and Securement      |
| ✓ Oil                     |                                |

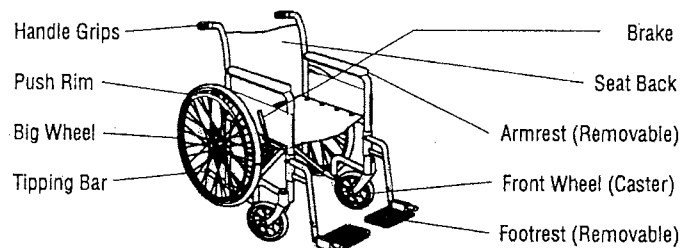
## 2 Basic Handling for Mobility Aids

Most of this chapter refers to the handling of manual wheelchairs. You cannot safely tip a power chair or scooter to the balance point. Tipping may spill acids from the batteries and cause severe burns. **DO NOT** tip the chair more than a few inches unless the batteries have been removed. Use common sense: avoid curbs, don't use stairs, and always ask your passenger how to provide assistance.

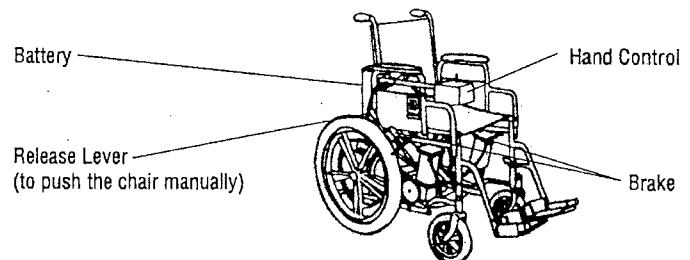
### 2.1 Types of Mobility Aids

The most common types of mobility aids are the standard manual wheelchair, the power drive (electric) wheelchair, and the electric scooter.

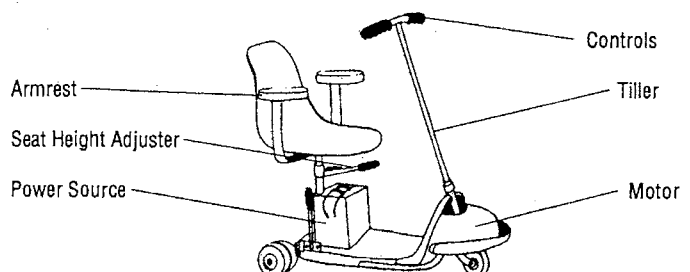
#### Standard Wheelchair



#### Electric Wheelchair



#### Electric Scooter



## 2.2 Watch Your Back \_\_\_\_\_

Proper lifting techniques are essential to prevent injuries. Remember to follow all the rules to watch your back, including keeping your back straight and using your legs to lift, while keeping the object being lifted close to the body.

## 2.3 Ten Tips for Wheelchair Handling \_\_\_\_\_

When handling a wheelchair, always remember to **ask** your passengers if you - or they - have any questions. (See also section 1.2 Just Ask: Communicating With Your Passengers.)

- ◆ Don't rush. Push at a normal walking speed.
- ◆ Inform the passenger about what you are doing at all times.
- ◆ Look ahead at least three metres (10 ft.) and along the sides of the chair.
- ◆ Slow down. Watch for small cracks or bumps, and go around them.
- ◆ Tip chair over bumps or cracks if they cannot be avoided. Use the tip bar to lower with control and don't bang the chair down.
- ◆ Watch out for other people.
- ◆ Judge distances by the front of the foot pedals rather than the front of the seat. Remember that the passengers' feet extend beyond the footrests.
- ◆ Beware of loose handle grips or armrests that are not properly locked in

place.

- ◆ Watch that hands and feet don't get caught in the wheels, or on the ground, curbs, etc.
- ◆ Be careful. Don't bang the chair or handle it roughly for the sake of the passenger and the chair.

## 2.4 Tipping a Manual Wheelchair to the Balance Point \_\_\_\_\_

You will have to tip a manual wheelchair backwards to the *balance point* to clear objects, go up and down curbs, or over rough ground. The balance point is the point where the chair requires little or no effort to stabilize, and can be easily manoeuvred on its rear wheels. This point varies according to the weight and height of the passenger, the type and size of wheelchair, and your size.

### Step One:

- ◆ Stand with one foot in front of the other.
- ◆ Place the front foot on the tip bar. Press down.
- ◆ Pull handle grips toward you and downwards.
- ◆ If the chair does not have push handles or tip bars, ask the owner how to best provide assistance.

## Step Two:



- ◆ Continue pulling the handle grips until the *balance point* is reached. The weight of the chair should rest in the palms of the hands and the chair should be balanced on its back wheels.
- ◆ Remove foot from tip bar.

## Step Three:

- ◆ To return the chair to all four wheels, carefully and gently reverse the above procedure.

## 2.5 Bumps & Rough Ground

### i. Bumps

Cracks, door jambs and even stones can stop the small front wheels of a chair from turning. These cases require you to slightly tilt the wheelchair backwards. Here's how:

- ◆ Tip the chair slightly using the tipping bar until the casters are clear of the bump.
- ◆ Keep your foot on the tip bar and push the chair past the bump.
- ◆ Set the chair down gently.

- ◆ Remember again, if the chair does not have push handles or tip bars, ask the owner what to do.

### ii. Rough Ground

When you leave the smooth, dry pavement, special techniques are needed to prevent the front wheels from digging into the ground and possibly causing your passenger to be ejected. Use these techniques when crossing uneven grass, mud, snow-covered walks or gravel driveways. You may find less resistance if the chair is pulled backward.

#### Frontwards

##### *On fairly level ground:*

- ◆ Tip the chair to the balance point as the big wheels are easier than the front ones to manoeuvre or turn on rough ground.
- ◆ While maintaining balance point, push the chair forward until you clear the rough ground.
- ◆ Return the chair to the upright position.

#### Backwards

Try going backwards on rough slopes. In heavy snow or where pushing is difficult, the casters can dig in, making for a rough ride for your passenger and difficulty for you.

- ◆ Back the chair to the edge of the rough ground and assume a safe base.
- ◆ Tilt back to the balance point.
- ◆ Check the ground in the direction of travel and look over your shoulder before moving.

- ◆ Step backward an arm's length away from the chair and pull using your leg muscles.
- ◆ Pull the chair toward you.
- ◆ Repeat until the area is cleared.
- ◆ Stop and return to all four wheels.

## 2.6 Curbs (Manual Wheelchairs Only) \_\_\_\_\_

### i. Going Up a Curb

- ◆ Go up over curbs frontwards, not backwards

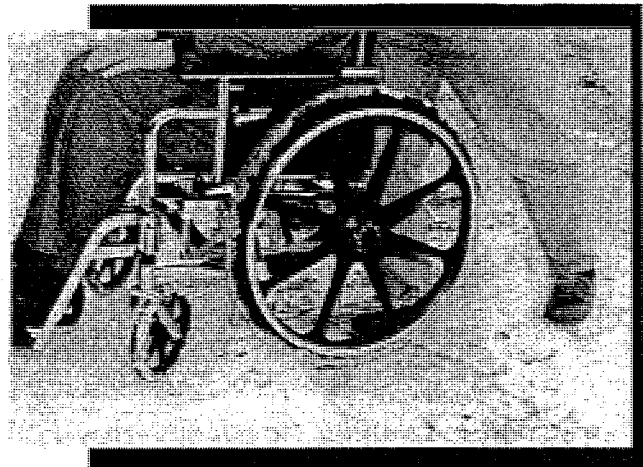


- ◆ Approach the curb at a 90-degree angle.
- ◆ Tilt the chair to the balance point.



- ◆ Move chair forward so that the rear

wheels touch the curb and the front casters are on the curb.



- ◆ Assume a *safe base* for stability by placing feet shoulder width apart, placing one foot slightly ahead of the other, and bending the knees slightly.
- ◆ Lift-roll the rear wheels over the curb.

### ii. Going Down a Curb

Reverse the previous procedures, taking care not to allow the rear wheels to drop off the curb edge. Go down backwards, rear wheels first. Note that some passengers feel uncomfortable going down a curb backwards and prefer to face the direction in which they are moving.

To go down a curb frontwards:

- ◆ Tip the chair to its balance point.
- ◆ Move to the curb edge and with control, rock the rear wheels down the curb.
- ◆ Move away from the curb, and using the tip bar, gently return to all four wheels.

## 2.7 Ramps

### i. Going Down a Ramp

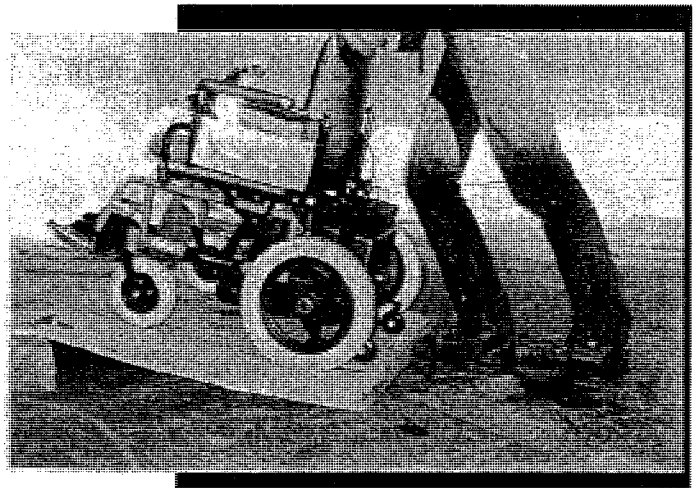
- ◆ Turn the chair so that the occupant faces up the ramp, particularly if the ramp is steep or slippery.
- ◆ Align the chair so that the rear wheels are at a 90-degree angle to the top.
- ◆ Brace the wheelchair against the thigh of one leg (not the knee).



Note: You can go down a ramp with your passenger facing downhill under certain circumstances. If, for example, the ramp has a gentle grade, the ramp surface is not slippery or slatted, and the weather is clear and dry, you might consider this method. Make sure the handgrips are secure to the chair before you do so.

### ii. Going Up a Ramp

- ◆ Place one leg behind the other.
- ◆ Step backward with your front leg.
- ◆ Allow the chair to rest on the thigh of the top leg.
- ◆ Look over your shoulder to check for obstacles, or slippery spots.
- ◆ Steer the chair straight down until you reach the bottom.
- ◆ When the bottom is reached, use small bump procedure (2.5) to ensure the footrests do not scrape on the ramp.



- ◆ Keep the chair upright on all four wheels.
- ◆ Push the chair forward.
- ◆ Be careful of wet or slippery areas.

- ◆ Use the small bump procedure (2.5) to ensure that footrests do not run into the base of the ramp. Note: This procedure usually applies to ramps which are arched. In most cases, ramps go gradually uphill to a flat surface.

## 2.8 Stairs

### (Manual Wheelchairs Only) \_\_\_\_\_

Wherever possible, use two people to take a person using a wheelchair up or down stairs. Doing it yourself is difficult and puts your back and passenger at risk. If your passenger has a lap belt, make sure it is secured at all times when moving the wheelchair.

#### Safety Tips

- ◆ Make sure the handle grips are secure. If they are loose, remove them.
- ◆ Never grasp removable parts such as arm or footrests.
- ◆ Always assume a safe base when lifting, stabilizing your weight.
- ◆ Use two people preferably to do the job and make sure they have good communication.
- ◆ Make sure the person is properly positioned in the chair, with feet securely on the rests and hands and arms away from the wheels.
- ◆ **NEVER go beyond your physical limitations.**

## One-Person (Not Preferred) Method

### i. Going Down Stairs

- ◆ Remember it is always safer to use two people to take a person using a wheelchair down stairs. Note as well that most of the same procedures apply whether one or two people negotiate the stairs.

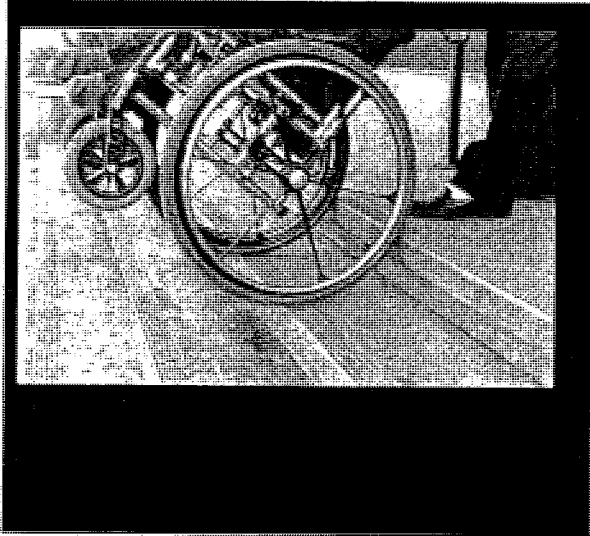


- ◆ Have the person using the wheelchair face downstairs.
- ◆ Stop the wheelchair well before reaching the first step.
- ◆ Tilt the chair to the balance point.



- ◆ Roll the chair forward to the edge of the step.

- ◆ Ensure the wheels are square with the edge.
- ◆ Assume a safe base.



- ◆ Roll the rear wheels only over the edge of the step.
- ◆ Use your body weight to hold the chair back.
- ◆ Rest the big wheels in the “V” of the step before rolling over the next step edge.



- ◆ Move one foot to the step the chair is on.
- ◆ Leave your other foot one step above.

- ◆ Repeat.
- ◆ When the bottom is reached, gently return the chair to upright position.

## ii. Going Up Stairs

Remember, it is always safer to use two people to take a person using a wheelchair up or down stairs.



- ◆ Back the wheelchair toward the first step and tip the chair to the balance point.
- ◆ With big wheels touching the bottom step, place one foot on the first step and the other on the next step above.
- ◆ Dominant leg should be on the higher step.



- ◆ Assume a safe base (bend knees, keep back straight).
- ◆ Pull on handle grips and lean backwards.
- ◆ Straighten your legs and bend your arms slightly as the big wheels come over the edge of the step.



- ◆ Pull the big wheels into the "V" of the step.
- ◆ Change footing and repeat.
- ◆ Once at the top, move the chair well away from the edge.
- ◆ Gently return the chair to the upright position

## Two-Person (Preferred) Method

### i. Going Down Stairs

Follow the same procedures as for going up and down stairs with one attendant. (With the person using the wheelchair facing downstairs, tilt the chair to the balance point and move to the edge of the first step.)



#### Upper attendant:

- ◆ Lowers the chair from step to step, using procedures listed in the one-person method.
- ◆ Gives verbal commands such as "1,2,3 lower" to synchronize the movement.

#### Lower attendant:

- ◆ Does not lift, but maintains control or pushes so weight isn't shifted to the upper attendant. If the lower attendant tries to "help" by lifting the front of the wheelchair, it puts the person holding the hand grips at risk by throwing off their balance.
- ◆ Grasps the low part of the wheelchair frame, not the movable or removable parts.

- ◆ Maintains the balance point of the chair.
- ◆ Holds the chair in the “V” of the step while the upper attendant changes footing.

## ii. Going Up Stairs

### Upper attendant:

- ◆ The strongest person assumes the back position.
- ◆ On a verbal command issued by the upper person, both attendants together lift/roll the wheelchair upward one step at a time.
- ◆ The upper attendant has better leverage, and should do most of the pulling.
- ◆ Lifting too much from the front can cause a loss of balance.

### Lower attendant:

- ◆ Follows the steps listed in Going Down Stairs.

## 2.9 Doors

### i. Doors Opening Outward



- ◆ Turn chair around and back through

doorway, and ensure the passenger's feet clear the doorway.

- ◆ Prop the door open with your foot or elbow, or carry a wedge for this purpose. You can also ask a passerby to hold the door for you.
- ◆ Turn chair back to forward position and push clear of the area, again ensuring the passenger's feet clear the doorway.
- ◆ Release the door.

### ii. Doors Opening Inward



- ◆ Place wheelchair at an angle slightly away from where the door will open.
- ◆ Hold chair with one hand and open door with the other.



- ◆ Use foot or elbow to hold door open.
- ◆ Push chair through doorway and release the door.

### 3 Loading and Unloading \_\_\_\_\_

One of the secrets behind the safe loading and unloading of your passengers is to plan ahead. You can make life easier for your passengers, yourself and other road users by thinking ahead about such things as positioning the vehicle.

#### 3.1 Positioning of Vehicle \_\_\_\_\_

- ◆ Avoid congested areas.
- ◆ Aim for a drive-through route where you can drive in and out without backing up.
- ◆ Stop where other drivers have a good view of your location.
- ◆ Avoid stopping where the passengers have to be taken down curbs, rough areas, snowbanks, puddles, etc.

- ◆ Turn the ignition off and remove the keys if the vehicle is to be left unattended. Note: In cold weather, some buses will not restart if this procedure is followed. Some buses are equipped with a “kill switch” that allows the driver to leave the vehicle running after removing the key. This allows the heat to remain on for the safety and comfort of passengers. If someone tries to take the vehicle, it will stall when put into gear and cannot be restarted without the key.

- ◆ Avoid getting too close to parked cars.
- ◆ Leave room for the ramp/lift.
- ◆ Leave room to manoeuvre the mobility aid on or off the ramp/lift.
- ◆ Stop as close as possible to the pick-up/drop-off area.

#### 3.2 Helping With Coats \_\_\_\_\_

Helping with coats and other personal services are not part of the job description for all drivers of persons with disabilities. Check your company’s policy on this subject, and use your own judgement and common sense.



- ◆ Thread your left arm through the left

sleeve of the person's coat. (Note: The starting arm may vary depending on the passenger's mobility of either arm.)

- ◆ Take your passenger's left arm and gently pull the sleeve up to the shoulder.



- ◆ Lean the person forward, support at the front with your arm, and pull the coat around the person's back.
- ◆ Pull excess material to opposite arm.



- ◆ Leave the coat off the shoulders, and repeat the first two steps for the person's right sleeve.
- ◆ Pull the coat up over the shoulders, and adjust it to make sure it looks smooth and neat.

Note: An alternate method is to place the jacket in the passenger's lap, facing outward with the collar on top. Thread the passenger's arms through the sleeves and gently take the jacket over the passenger's head. Adjust. This method is not for passengers who cannot raise their arms.

### 3.3 Assisting Ambulatory Passengers

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Some of your passengers can walk on their own or may use a cane or walker. To help these passengers, remember the ASK rule: ASK if and how they might need assistance, but wait until your offer is accepted before you help. Touching a person unannounced can throw them off balance and lead to a fall. It is particularly important to ASK people with walkers how you can help before the point when they must leave their walkers behind to board the vehicle.

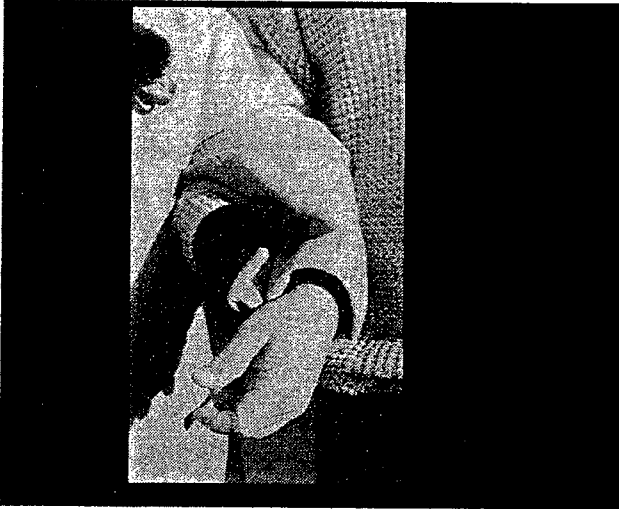
If a passenger wants assistance, ASK specifically how you may help. If the passenger refuses help, stay close by and be prepared just in case. The following procedures are recommended to assist an ambulatory passenger:



- ◆ Offer your arm to passengers with visual

impairments, or people who need little support.

- ◆ Your passenger should grasp your arm just above the elbow.
- ◆ Your job is to act as a guide. Always walk slightly ahead of your passenger, and agree on your pace.



- ◆ For passengers who require support, hold your forearm at a 90-degree angle to your upper arm.
- ◆ Your passenger then puts his or her forearm inside your arm for extra support.

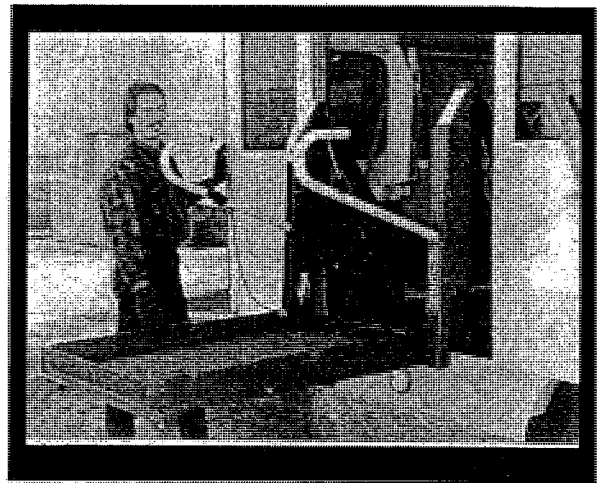
Note: If a passenger is about to fall, do everything to cushion the fall, but don't try to prevent it. Attempting to stop a fall can result in injuries for both you and the passenger.

### 3.4 Loading Using a Lift \_\_\_\_\_

To help passengers on and off a vehicle using a lift requires common sense and a knowledge of your vehicle's entry system. The safest method varies with the type of equipment, the size of the mobility aid, etc. Side-loading lifts require the passenger to face away from the

vehicle. Rear-loading lift systems require the passenger to face the vehicle. The following procedure is recommended for both types of lifts:

- ◆ Put the parking brake on.
- ◆ Check to see your passengers have done up their lap belts before starting.
- ◆ Make sure the doors are locked open and cannot swing closed.

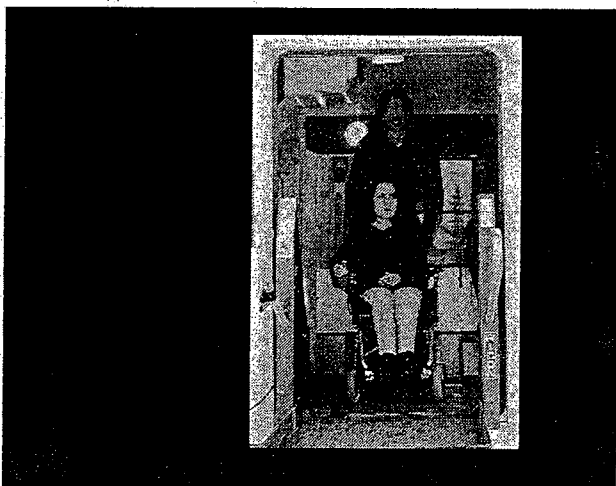


- ◆ Lower lift to ground level, being careful not to pound it into the ground or leave it resting on uneven ground.



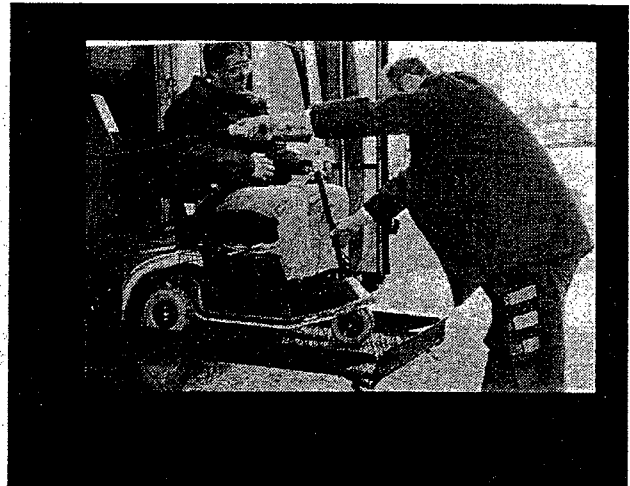
- ◆ Place the mobility aid on the lift, with the passenger facing away from the vehicle, making sure that the passenger's feet and legs or parts of the mobility aid will not get caught between the vehicle and the lift.

- ◆ Put on the mobility aid's brakes, if available.
- ◆ Put up the safety plate on the lift (on some vehicles, this is done automatically).
- ◆ Drivers should ride on the lift with the passenger when possible, but some scooters and electric chairs are too big to allow this. Drivers must keep one hand on the mobility aid to ensure they are immediately aware of any movement of the chair while on the lift.
- ◆ Release the brakes.
- ◆ Roll the mobility aid into the vehicle and apply brakes.



- ◆ Enter the vehicle and manoeuvre the mobility aid to the desired location, ensuring the passenger's feet are clear.
- ◆ Use tie-downs, seat belts, shoulder straps and mobility aid brakes.
- ◆ Don't forget to return the lift to the upright position and ensure the doors are closed before re-entering the vehicle.

- ◆ Develop a routine. If distracted, take a breath and return to the routine to ensure no steps are missed or are incomplete.



Follow the same procedures for all mobility aids, making sure the safety plate is up before you start the lift (if it does not go up automatically), and remembering to keep one hand on the mobility aid at all times.

### 3.5 Unloading Using a Lift \_\_\_\_\_

To unload, reverse the procedures in 3.4 Loading Using a Lift.

### 3.6 Mobility Aid and Passenger Restraint Systems \_\_\_\_\_

#### i. Securing Wheelchairs and Passengers



- ◆ Make sure your passengers leave their pickup point with their lap belts secured,

if they have their own lap belt attached to their chair.

- ◆ Centre the chair on the four plates on the floor.

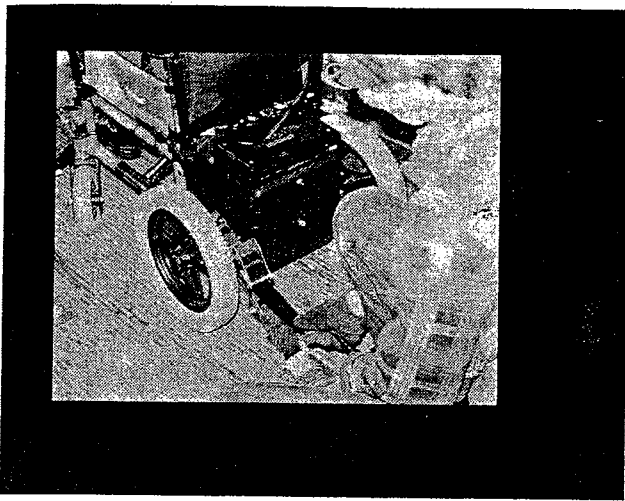


- ◆ If passengers prefer to use a lap belt attached to the vehicle, take the belt and attach it to one of the rear tie-downs. Pass it around the passenger, holding it away from the passenger's body. Take the other end and secure it to the other rear tie-down.
- ◆ When using a shoulder strap, be sensitive to your passenger and be as unobtrusive as possible.
- ◆ Take the shoulder strap from the wall, holding it away from your passenger's body with one hand. While still holding the strap, use your other hand to clip it to the four-point tie-down on the mobility aid.
- ◆ Gently release the shoulder strap and pull the adjustment snugly.

- ◆ Secure the two front tie-downs. Attach the clip into the floor plate and pull the belt to the estimated length required to secure the hook.
- ◆ Attach the hook to a solid frame member on the wheelchair.



- ◆ Tighten the belt so it is secure but not forced, and make sure the belt forms a 45-degree angle to the floor.
- ◆ Overtightening may damage the wheelchair.
- ◆ Keep the belts clean and off the floor by securing the velcro tabs.
- ◆ Repeat the procedure with the rear belts, again having the belts form a 45-degree angle to the floor.



- ◆ For manual wheelchairs, hook the belt to a solid frame member near the place where the chair seat and back meet.
- ◆ When tied down, the wheelchair should be snug and not wiggle back and forth, but it should not be driven into the floor.

## ii. Securing Scooters and Passengers

Three or four-wheel scooters can be a challenge to secure, particularly if there are no clips or rings attached to the rear framework. Some companies will not transport scooters unless they can be properly secured. Passengers are advised to contact the scooter manufacturer to make any adjustments and not leave the job to amateurs. Otherwise, the scooter can sustain damage and the safety of all passengers can be compromised.

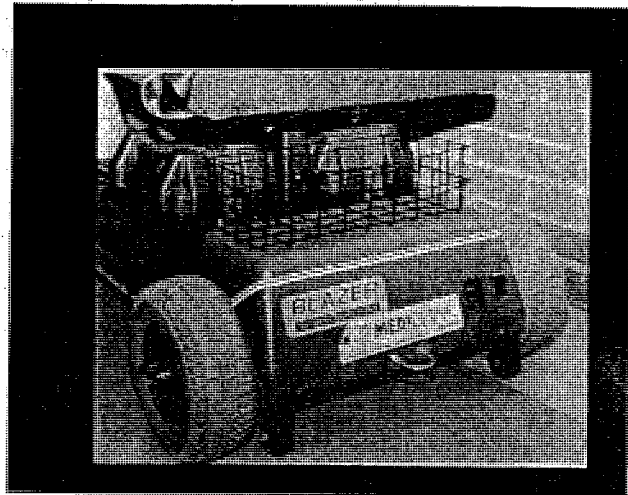
### The Safest Way

The safest way to travel with a passenger who uses a scooter is to have the person transfer to a seat and use a lap belt and shoulder strap. Some companies make this practice a requirement.

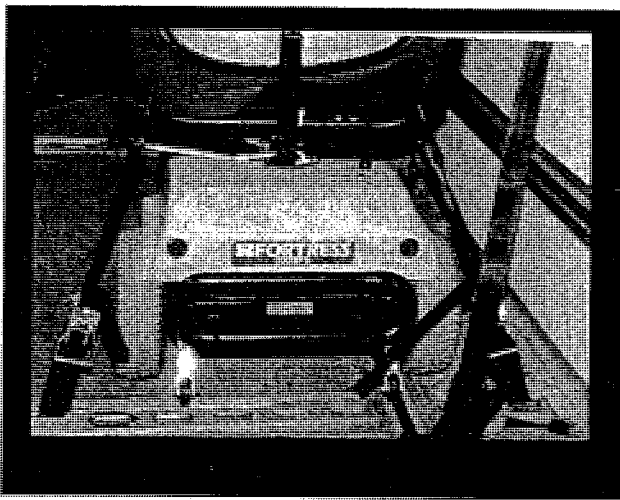
If passengers are reluctant to leave their scooter, the best procedure is to appeal to their reason, emphasizing safety:

- ◆ Explain to passengers that it is extremely dangerous for *everyone* on the vehicle if they remain on their scooters.
- ◆ Mention that they can easily tip going around corners because their centre of gravity is high, and this possibility puts all passengers at risk.
- ◆ Some passengers may be unable to transfer from their scooters. In these cases, or when the person refuses to leave their scooter, it should be secured as described below. The person should be secured with a lap belt and shoulder strap.

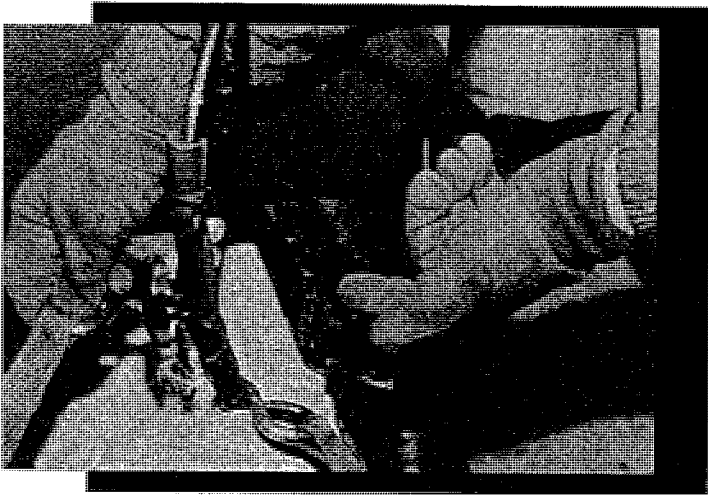
Secure scooters using the same procedures for wheelchairs: tie them down using the four-point system in the floor, tightening the straps so the scooter is snug but not too tight.



- ◆ Scooters should be equipped with clips, bars or D-rings installed by the manufacturer on the rear framework.
- ◆ The safest way to secure the back of a scooter is by looping the belts through the clip, ring or bar attached to the rear framework. The belts should form 45-degree angles to the floor.



- ◆ Less safe and less secure methods of tying down the back of a scooter are by attaching the clips around the pedestal or the chair frame. Note: The pedestal and frame can detach during a collision.



- ◆ Secure the front of the scooter by hooking each belt to the tiller and crisscrossing them in front.
- ◆ Attach the belts to the two floor plates and adjust.

### Child Safety Seats

*Alberta Transportation and Utilities wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Edmonton Transit (DATS) in providing ideas for this section.*

The leading cause of death and injury to children under the age of 14 in Alberta is motor vehicle collisions. In a typical year, 35 children are killed and 1,900 are seriously injured at a staggering emotional and financial cost to society.

In Alberta, the law requires that all children under six years of age weighing less than 18 kg (40 lbs.) must be properly secured in an approved child safety seat while travelling in a motor vehicle. While there are some exceptions to this law (such as taxis, emergency vehicles and vehicles that were not originally equipped with seat belts), other vehicles must follow the regulations.

Although parents are expected to secure their children correctly in the appropriate seat, **the drivers are legally responsible to ensure that all passenger who travel in their motor vehicles are correctly secured into the vehicle. In the event of injury, a driver is held liable, not the parent who secured the child and safety seat.**

### Legal Requirements

Section 65 (21) of the Alberta Highway Traffic Act gives the following requirements:

All children less than six years of age weighing less than 18 kg (40 lbs.) must be restrained in the:

1. Prescribed child seating assembly. It has to be the appropriate seat for the child.
2. The seat must be properly installed. It must be secured by a vehicle seatbelt system and in the case of the forward facing child restraint systems, it **MUST** also be secured by the tether strap.

3. The child must be properly secured into the seat. The harness system must hold the child securely.

The seat must meet Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (213) and must have a label stating the seat meets CMVSS requirements and giving instructions on how to use and install the seat.

The requirements are:

**Infant Seats** — CMVSS 213.1  
(Infants to 9 kg/20 lbs.)

**Booster Seats** — CMVSS 213.2  
(Children up to 18 kg/40lbs.)

**Seats for Children With Disabilities** — CMVSS 213.3  
(Custom/production systems)

**Integrated Seats** — CMVSS 213.4  
(9-18 kg/20-40 lbs.)

For more information, contact the Alberta Motor Association at 1-800-222-6578 or Alberta Transportation and Utilities at 427-8901.

### Types of Child Safety Seats

There are many different makes and models, but the seats fall into three basic categories:

- ◆ **Infant Seat:** For babies under 9 kg (20 lbs.). Should always face the rear in vehicles. Does not have to be tethered to the vehicle, but must be secured by a seat belt.

- ◆ **Toddler Seat:** Designed for a child from 9-18 kg (20-40 lbs.). More “chair-like” in appearance than infant seats. Should always be placed facing forward. Must be tethered to vehicle and secured by a seat belt.

- ◆ **Booster Seat:** Children over six years or 18 kg (40 lbs.) are not required to be in child safety seat. Booster seats raise the child up to see out the window. Does not have to be tethered to the vehicle, but must be secured by a seat belt.

Note: Seats must be properly tethered. Check your vehicle owner’s manual for specifications.

### Parent Responsibilities

Parents can reasonably be expected to:

- ◆ Provide the appropriate seat that meets CMVSS standards.
- ◆ Know how to use the seat, and adjust the belts, straps and harnesses to fit the child *before* travelling.
- ◆ Transport the child and seat to and from the vehicle, install the seat correctly, attend to the child’s care at all times, or arrange for assistance if unable to do so independently. Sometimes, drivers can provide assistance, but check your company policy.

## Driver Responsibilities

Drivers are expected to:

- ◆ Remember they are liable, not the parents.
- ◆ Know the correct ways to tether and use different types of child safety seats.
- ◆ Place children by their parent or guardian.
- ◆ Check that the parent has properly fitted and fastened the child's internal seat belt, straps or harness.
- ◆ Check that the child safety seat is properly secured in the vehicle using the vehicle's seat belts and tether straps (if applicable).
- ◆ Ensure that infant seats face the rear, while toddler and booster seats face forward.

Because drivers have the final responsibility, they should also let their dispatcher or supervisor know of incidents where parents:

- ◆ Required assistance.
- ◆ Provided seats that appeared unsafe or were not CMVSS approved.

## 4 Defensive Driving \_\_\_\_\_

Defensive driving, like customer service, starts with attitude. A good driving attitude is absolutely essential for a professional driver like yourself. Use the Three Cs: Courtesy, Consideration and Caution at all times. A fourth "C" is Common Sense. Be alert, well rested, and do not expect a lot from other drivers.

As a driver of people with disabilities, you must also make an extra effort to plan ahead, know your route and know which lane you should be in to make sure the ride is as smooth as possible.

### 4.1 A Glass on the Dashboard \_\_\_\_\_

Think of it this way: imagine a glass of water on the dashboard, and drive carefully and smoothly to make sure the water never spills. Stop and start gently. Take more care to be cautious. Allow extra time to check and doublecheck. Avoid any action, such as following too closely, which might result in the need to stop unexpectedly. Some other tips:

- ◆ **The Four Second Rule.** To avoid following too closely, use this rule. Wait until the vehicle ahead passes a stationary object and count "one thousand and one, one thousand and two, etc." If you reach that object before you hit "one thousand and four", you are following too closely. Extend the rule to five or six seconds when the weather and road conditions are poor.
- ◆ **Don't make unnecessary lane changes.** Turn carefully. Remember that glass.
- ◆ **Know, Slow, Show and Go.** That's the way the Canada Safety Council Defensive Driving Course says to negotiate an intersection. **Know** what you want to do in advance. Expect the unexpected. Trust no one. **Slow** down gradually at intersections. **Show** your signal light well in advance. **Go** through the intersection without hesitation to avoid confusing other motorists.

## 4.2 Backing Up \_\_\_\_\_

Backing up is always hazardous, but particularly so in a van with rear lifts or ramps. Restricted visibility means that you can't always see small vehicles or pedestrians move behind your vehicle. Here are some tips to reduce the dangers:

- ◆ Back up only when absolutely necessary. Plan your route so you can drive in and out without backing up.
- ◆ Check for debris on the road, curbs, potholes, snowbanks, etc. before backing up.
- ◆ Make sure the way is clear. Check all blind spots. Wherever possible, have someone reliable check the rear before you move.
- ◆ When you leave your vehicle for any reason, make a point of checking the rear before entering the vehicle. Better still, get out and look -- don't rely on mirrors only.
- ◆ Before reversing, give some warning with the horn if your vehicle does not automatically beep when backing up. Remember that using horns and warning devices does not guarantee that pedestrians will move out of the way.
- ◆ Reverse slowly. It will give people or vehicles a chance to move, and will minimize damage if you hit a stationary object.

## 5 Collision & Emergency Procedures \_\_\_\_\_

The best time to think about emergency procedures is *before* an emergency occurs. While each emergency is unique, you need to know beforehand what to do to avoid panic or poor judgements that can be fatal for your passengers. Talking and reading about what to do in an emergency, or asking every possible "what if?" question are not enough -- you also need to have some kind of a mock exercise or run-through to test your plans. Municipalities and health care facilities all have emergency plans that you should know about as well because you could very well have a part to play in a municipal emergency.

Each company that transports people with disabilities has, or should have, a policy to deal with collisions and emergencies. Find out what your policy is, and know what to do in an emergency. The following are some questions you need to consider:

- ◆ **First Aid Training**  
Do you have training in first aid and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR)? If not, you should.
- ◆ **Emergency Equipment**  
Do you know where your emergency equipment is? Is the equipment in good working order? Do you know how to use the equipment, including flares and fire extinguishers? The answer should be yes to all three questions.
- ◆ **Emergency Contacts**  
Do you know who to contact in an emergency (police, fire, ambulance, dispatcher)? Do you know their phone numbers? Do you know what information to give them? Write this

information down on the last page (page 31) of this manual.

◆ **Evacuation Procedures**

There is no common procedure for evacuation, but there are some basic guidelines. First, it is usually not necessary to evacuate except if there is a fire or danger of fire (such as when gasoline is spilled), or if the vehicle is in an unsafe position. Stay calm, reassure the passengers and let emergency personnel know of your situation if you have time. Assign passers-by with specific tasks such as directing traffic, calling for help, helping evacuate passengers or tending to the injured.

- ◆ **If you are not in immediate danger,** help the ambulatory passengers first and leave by the quickest and safest exit (the lift or ramp or another exit). **If time is of prime importance,** remove the passengers in most danger first, and then the ones who are the quickest and easiest to evacuate or appear to have the least serious injuries. Handle injured passengers as little as possible. In all evacuations, move the passengers at least 35 metres away from the vehicle, and upwind if there are gasoline fumes.

◆ **Laws Relating to Motor Vehicle Collisions**

Talk to your employer and insurance company to get the specific requirements to follow if you are involved in a collision. If you are in a collision, you are responsible to remain at the scene, give your name and address, operator's licence number, vehicle registration number, proof of insurance, and similar information about your employer to any peace officer and

witness. You must also offer assistance if someone is injured. If you collide with an unattended vehicle, you must locate the person in charge of the vehicle, or leave a notice on the vehicle with your name and address, operator's licence number, and your vehicle's registration number.

◆ **Don't trust your memory.**

If you are in a collision, gather as much information as possible, including diagrams and maps, to use in the investigation. Write down -- as soon as possible -- notes about time, date, temperature, weather, road and traffic conditions, statements of others, direction of travel, action of other vehicles, witness names and addresses, condition of other vehicle (cracked windshields, previous damage, etc.), a diagram and apparent condition of other drivers. A suggested collision report and list of emergency contacts for you to fill out are included in Appendices B & C.

◆ **You are an ambassador.**

You represent the company. Keep your professional cool.

# Appendix A

## Disability Awareness

*The following appendix is reprinted with minor changes with the kind permission of Edmonton Transit, Custom Transportation Services (DATS).*

A person with a disability is, first and foremost, a person. Treat your clients the way you want to be treated, with concern, respect, dignity and understanding. Learn to recognize the symptoms and limitations of particular disabilities. Determine the client's ability to stand, communicate, walk or manoeuvre a wheelchair; whether pain, stiffness or weakness is a factor, and the degree of caution you must take.

The following list of disabilities provides a brief description of some symptoms and limitations that may be present, and gives some insight into the special handling techniques that may be required.

It is important to remember that each individual will be affected differently. Simply knowing the type of disability will not automatically tell you what your client can or cannot do. When dealing with a client who is new to you, always ask, "How may I help you?"

Common sense, courtesy and consideration are the basis.

### Common Symptoms and Limitations

### Assistance Guidelines

#### A. Aging

May have decreased strength, speed and/or co-ordination.

*Offer assistance; stay close.*

May have impaired balance.

*Use extra care when boarding and deboarding.*

May suffer serious injury in fall -- brittle bones, etc.

*Help to avoid falls.*

May have impaired vision in judging distance, etc.

*Pull up close to the curb. Take extra care on uneven surfaces.*

May have decreased sense of touch.

*Ensure not too close to heater.*

Memory loss/confusion.

*Be patient; respectful.*

Sensitivity to heat and cold.

*In cold weather, keep vehicle doors closed when possible.*

## B. Cardiac & Respiratory Diseases

Shortness of breath aggravated by exertion. \_\_\_\_\_ *Smoke and dust may complicate problems.*

Must move slowly. \_\_\_\_\_ *Be patient and sensitive.*

May have chest pain. \_\_\_\_\_ *May need medical help. If severe and/or persistent, contact dispatch.*

May carry medication for relief of symptoms. \_\_\_\_\_ *Clients know best how and when to use their medication.*

## C. Developmental Disability

All levels of severity exist. \_\_\_\_\_ *Be patient: may require more time to understand.*

## D. Epilepsy

Seizures may occur. Seizures vary from momentary to a generalized convulsion with loss of consciousness. \_\_\_\_\_

*Do not put anything into a client's mouth during a seizure.*

*Do not attempt to restrain. The main objective is to try to avoid having the person strike objects during a seizure.*

*If possible, turn the client on his/her side to allow saliva to drain away.*

*If prolonged and/or severe, call dispatch for medical assistance.*

## E. Hearing Impaired

May have balance problems. \_\_\_\_\_ *Offer assistance to navigate. Speak at a normal rate, facing the person directly, not his/her escort.*

*Keep a pen and paper in vehicle.*

*Don't assume mental impairment.*

## F. Kidney Dialysis Treatment

May feel weak and ill following treatment. \_\_\_\_\_ *Assist in navigating and make as comfortable as possible.*

## G. Spinal Cord Injuries

Paralysis, loss of sensation. \_\_\_\_\_ *Injuries, including fractures may occur without client's knowledge.*

May use neck or back brace. \_\_\_\_\_ *Avoid sudden stops, starts and turns.*

Instability.

## H. Multiple Sclerosis

Cycles of improvement and worsening of symptoms. \_\_\_\_\_ *Be sensitive to psychological consequences for client.*

Visual impairment. \_\_\_\_\_ *See "Visually Impaired"*

Weakness or loss of control of one or more limbs. \_\_\_\_\_ *Assistance in navigating as required.*

Clumsiness.

Speech abnormalities. \_\_\_\_\_ *Patience is needed.*

## I. Muscular Dystrophy

Progressive weakness in muscles. \_\_\_\_\_ *May require assistance on inclines, steps and while manoeuvring.*

Large muscle groups around shoulders, trunk and hips most effected. \_\_\_\_\_ *Sudden stops, starts and turns may result in injury to the neck or loss of balance.*

## J. Speech Disabilities

May vary in degree (stuttering, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_ *Be honest. Don't say you understand if you don't. Repeat what you thought the person said and give client a chance to confirm or not.*

*Ask client to repeat. Be patient. Don't hurry your client as it causes more stress.*

*Don't assume developmental disability.*

## K. Stroke

Weakness, poor balance. \_\_\_\_\_ *May require assistance navigating.*

Loss of memory. \_\_\_\_\_ *May require attendant.*

Partial to complete paralysis, often to one side. \_\_\_\_\_ *Avoid taking the paralyzed arm when giving assistance.*

Difficulty speaking and understanding. \_\_\_\_\_ *Be patient; sensitive.*

## L. Visually Impaired

May be accompanied by a certified guide dog. \_\_\_\_\_ *The dog is working. **Do not** touch or distract without the owner's permission.*

Varying degrees of impairment. \_\_\_\_\_ *Speak directly to visually impaired person, not an escort.*

*Identify yourself and let your clients know you are addressing them by using their name or touching their arm.*

*Smile -- smiles can be felt and heard.*

**Appendix B**

**Suggested Collision Report**

Your Vehicle

Location \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_  
Your Vehicle Number \_\_\_\_\_ Plate Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Make \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ Serial # \_\_\_\_\_  
Insurance Policy & Co. \_\_\_\_\_

Damage \_\_\_\_\_ Estimated Damage \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Operator's Licence No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Driver's Phone # (Bus.) \_\_\_\_\_ (Res.) \_\_\_\_\_  
Driver's Address \_\_\_\_\_

Injuries \_\_\_\_\_  
Passenger Names \_\_\_\_\_  
Passenger Addresses \_\_\_\_\_  
Injuries \_\_\_\_\_

Second Vehicle

Make \_\_\_\_\_ Model \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_  
Licence Number \_\_\_\_\_ Estimated Damage \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance Policy # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Driver's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Driver's Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Driver's Phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
Owner's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Operator's Licence Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Injuries \_\_\_\_\_

Passengers \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Witnesses \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other Vehicles(If applicable) - Registered Owner/Address/Registration # \_\_\_\_\_

Other Property Damage (if not auto)- Type/Estimated Damage/ Owner's Name & Address  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



