



FACILITIES &
MAINTENANCE

ADA Essentials for Accessible Aquatic Facilities: Why Accessibility Matters

BY ED BAUER

Aquatic access is more than compliance—it provides freedom of movement, therapeutic benefits, and a sense of inclusion for students and staff with mobility challenges. Ensuring full access protects both student well-being and institutional reputation.

Core ADA Requirements (Since 2012)

Accessibility must extend to:

- Parking & walkways
- Locker rooms & restrooms
- Route to the pool deck
- Accessible entry into the pool

Pool Entry Rules:

- **Under 300 linear ft.:** 1 accessible entry (lift or sloped entry).
- **Over 300 linear ft.:** 2 accessible entries—preferably different types.

Lift Essentials:

- Must be **installed and operational whenever the pool is open.**
- Users must be able to **operate from deck & water levels independently.**

- **Clear deck space** required for wheelchairs/scooters.
- **300 lb. minimum capacity** (higher recommended).

Official Standards: Access Board ADA Guidelines, Chapter 10.

Choosing a Pool Lift: Two Main Options

Battery-Powered Lifts

- Higher lifetime cost
- Batteries require **daily charging & frequent replacement**
- Electronic components prone to corrosion
- Multiple moving parts that require scheduled maintenance
- Increased staff labor

Water-Powered Lifts

- **No operating expense**
- Minimal maintenance: clean & inspect
- Highly reliable—runs as long as the city water system does
- Eco-friendly; can support **LEED certification**

Best Fit for Colleges:

Water-powered lifts generally offer the strongest long-term value for institutional settings with high usage and limited maintenance staffing.

Maintenance Snapshot

Battery-Powered

Charge main & backup batteries daily
Replace batteries regularly
Maintain remotes, actuators, gears, contacts, and lubricated parts
Avoid overheating—often requires staffing to move batteries in/out

Water-Powered

- Turn on water each morning
- Cycle lift up/down to bleed air



SOLAR OPTIONS

Maintains battery life and reduces need to remove battery for charging.



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- Then ready for all-day use—**no further staff attention needed**
- Net-zero energy: lift water returns to pool

Common Misconceptions

“We’ll activate the lift if someone asks.”

Incorrect—ADA requires lifts to be **installed and functional at all times** the pool is open.

“Accessibility equipment won’t get used.”

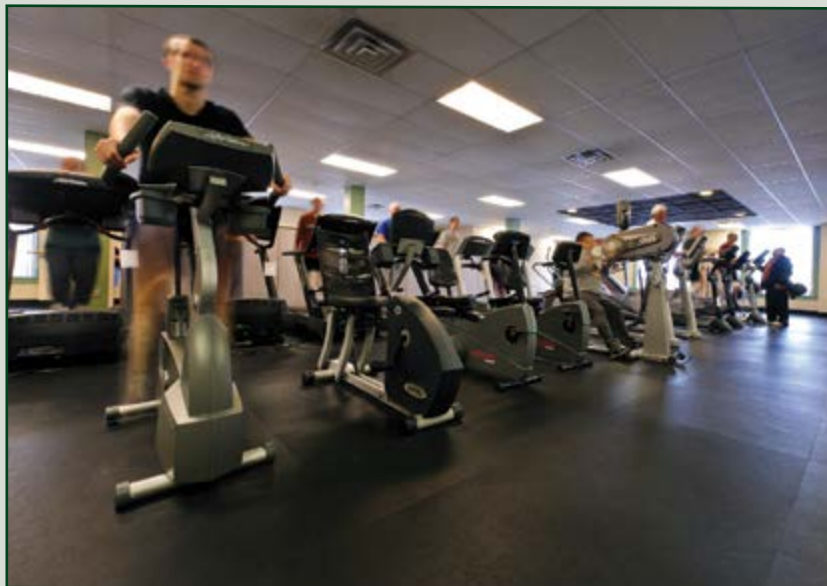
Many students rely on warm-water movement for **therapy, rehabilitation, and mobility**, even if they do not disclose it.

“Any lift meets ADA requirements.”

Devices must be usable **independently**, have proper **deck clearance**, and match actual facility conditions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ed Bauer has been in publishing for over twenty years. He worked on the staff at Mount Union College.

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