Handicap Ramp

Design and Construction

Guidelines

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Rockwell Collins Retiree Volunteers
RCRV

and

Wheelchair Ramp Assistance Program
WRAP
Handicap Ramp Design and Construction Guidelines

Rockwell Collins Retiree Volunteers (RCRV) builds handicap ramps for various service agencies in the Cedar Rapids, Iowa area. The service agency identifies the need and pays for the materials. RCRV provides the free labor. Each ramp design must be completed on an individual basis to accommodate home owner, site and individual needs. As a result, a generic process can be defined which is then applied on an individual basis. This process flow includes the following steps:

- Handicap ramp need identified to RCRV
- Identify ramp designer
- Survey site
- Design ramp including material list and cost
- Funding request
- Funding available
- Obtain building permit (if required)
- Ramp build scheduled
- Materials ordered and Delivered
- Construction crew arranged
- Construction of ramp
- Notify building department of ramp completion

The project requires a considerable amount of coordination and communication. The steps which usually take the longest calendar time to complete are: Site survey, ramp design, funding arrangement, and scheduling the materials and construction crews. Completion of a ramp project will typically be 4-6 weeks long even though the actual construction is only 1-2 days.

The requirements that must be accommodated in the design of a handicapped-access ramp include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consideration</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home entry</td>
<td>The choice of door to which to run a ramp is influenced by the ease of access within the home to the various doorways, the widths of the doorways, and whether any platforms, stairs or porches already exist to which a ramp could be connected.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Space limitations and obstacles</td>
<td>Many aspects of the design of a ramp are limited by the space available and obstacles (such as trees, buildings, and walkways) that affect where it can be run. Also, where is the lower end of the ramp to be terminated?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building codes</td>
<td>Explicit and implicit code requirements imposed by the city or county. Some cities require a signed permission slip from the owner stating that they want WRAP to build handicap ramp on their property.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard practices</td>
<td>Design standards that are commonly applied in the area. Also, although they are not legal requirements for homeowners, the ADA Standards for Accessible Design [<a href="http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adastd94.pdf">http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adastd94.pdf</a>] establish practices for commercial ramps that may be applicable or expected in home construction. We also follow the guidelines established by the Cedar Rapids Building Department (attached).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Specifics of the disability and means of movement | Although “standard” designs work well for many people, the specifics of how the ramp will be used MAY affect the design. Examples include:  
- If the disabled person can only be move with his/her legs extended, wider turning platforms are needed than can be accommodated by someone who can move in a wheel chair with the feet lowered.  
- If the disabled person uses a walker but is unstable on slopes, shallow steps are probably preferable to a ramp.  
- If the caretaker for the disabled person is weak, the ramp will need to be less steep than normal. Conversely, a powered chair or scooter can make a steeper-than-standard ramp quite acceptable.  
- A design standard slope is 1:12; however several ramps have been built with 1:10 slope due to space limitations. 1:8 slope is an absolute maximum. |
| Landing or deck attached to the house | If the house is not setting on frost footing, such a mobile home, the landing or deck next to the house is not attached to the house and is not on frost footings either. If the house is set on frost footings, as all permanent homes, the landing or deck next to the house must be set on frost footings. If the front stoop is set on frost footing, then the landing or deck may be set on top of the stoop. Otherwise the landing or deck next to the house must be set on posts set on frost footings. These decks or landings should be attached to the house. Always allow for frost movement. |
| Expected useful life of the ramp | A ramp with a longer expected useful life (more than 5 years?) or a tall structure may need to be solidly attached to the home and built on frost footings. Ramps expected to be used for five years or less will be built without frost footings. Some jurisdictions may not allow frost free footings. The justification for frost free footings is that they are temporary structures. |
| Neighborhood covenants | Restrictions, especially affecting the aesthetic qualities of a ramp, may be imposed by non-governmental agencies. For example, many mobile-home parks require that skirting be installed to hide the space underneath a ramp. |
| Aesthetic compatibility with the neighborhood | The appearance of the ramp, especially the type of railing treatment (balusters, rails, etc.), should be chosen to ensure that a functional ramp is not viewed as an eyesore by neighbors. |
| Homeowner preferences | If a ramp is needed in a home owned by someone other than the family of the disabled person, the requirements of the owner may trump all other considerations. Also, the homeowner may desire to match some existing decking or railing design. |
| Client preferences | When designing a ramp that is not financed by the client or homeowner, trade-offs must be made between functionality and cost. Some client preferences can be accommodated with little impact on cost; others cannot. The ramp designer must deal with these tradeoffs to meet the client’s real needs while ensuring that an agency intending to provide home access does not end up footing the bill for a great party deck. |
| Access limitations | It may be appropriate, particularly when designing a long ramp, to include steps or other means for non-disabled people (such as mail carriers and delivery people) to reach the doorway without navigating the ramp. |

Some standards design practices have been developed which provide simplified, low cost construction to take place. These standards are the starting point of each design, and although variations can and sometimes must be made to these standards, adherence to them is desired. These Standards of Ramp Design include:

- Construction with treated lumber
Assemble with screws (no bolts or nails)
- Standard width 42" clearance between posts (allows 39" clearance between railings)
- Use three 2x6" stringers (see 90° and 180° Landing Detail drawings for ramp framing)
- Posts 4x4" and spacing not more than 8 feet (6’ nominal)
- Posts to rest on 12”X12” piece of treated ¾” plywood for ground support
- Assure lateral stability of posts (cross bracing at least one place in each direction as needed)
- Stringers are attached to the posts with 3.5” screws where possible. Also use Spax, Torx or lag 1/4 inch by 4 inch screws at sill to home (not mobile homes) and at every load joint, typically 2x6’s attached to 4x4s.
- Use of hangers required on all free stringers (not attached to 4x4) and use of hanger nails 1 5/8 required, not screws.
- Use 2x6 beams 49” long or as required under stringers at every 4x4 connecting post unless the stringer is resting on or very close to the ground. A center post is not needed if a beam is used.
- In places where a free standing post does not have a beam cross member, 18.75" 2x6 cross braces should be placed between the stringers to stabilize lateral movement of the post.
- Tall decks or ramps should have diagonal bracing between the posts to stabilize the structure.
- Use 5/4 x 6” decking boards on ramp surface and attach with 2.5” screws. (Shank on 2.5” gives relief for decking, more than 2 inch.)
  - Recommend hand rail with finger hold routed out of 2x6. Ready made vertical hand rails may be purchased in only 8 ft length at lumber yards. Vertical hand rails routed from a raw 2x6 can be obtained with any desired length. (Prior design using a 5/4x6 and 2x4 rail raised some concern with some building inspectors due to the long reach for a finger hold.)
- Railing height 36” above decking
- Railing should extend 12” beyond end of ramp. This may be waved if it interferes with ramp access.
  - Enclosed sides are required for sections of the ramp over 30” above the ground or other lower surface. The sides must be enclosed with 4” max openings.
  - If ramp over 30” high, use two horizontal 5/4x6” deck boards or balusters (must be enclosed with 4” max openings)
  - Some building inspectors object to a “ladder” type of enclosed side that consists of horizontal boards. Four vertical rails can be ripped from 5/4 decking for less than the baluster cost at stores, when vertical rails are needed.
- Toe Board – use 2x4 mounted 3 ½” above decking
- Use 5x8’ platform for 180 degree turnaround (see Figure 1, 180° Landing Detail drawing)
- Use 5x5’ platform (inside offset) for 90 degree turn (see Figure 2, 90° Landing Detail drawing)
- A landing is required after each 30’ of ramp length. Landing should be 5’ long.
- Vary joint locations of stringers, railing members and toe boards for improved stability
- An End Post Bracket is used to support the two end posts. This is fabricated from steel angle iron and plates as shown in the drawing.
- A Ramp End Assembly is constructed from wood as shown in the drawings. This may either be fabricated in advance or on site. The structure is screwed together from the bottom and attached to the end posts with screws through the 2x4 toe board. A ¾” plywood base may be required under the End Post Bracket and Ramp End Assembly to stabilize it on the ground. (see Figures 3 and 4, Handicap Ramp Termination drawings)
- The building codes of the City of CR are followed (see Figure 5, Cedar Rapids building code handout)
- Each installation requires site assessment and a design developed
- A great deal of time may be saved on the construction site by developing a very accurate bill of materials in advance. The bill of materials should identify where each item is to be used.

Figures 6 through 13 are photos of a typical ramp constructed using the design standards described above. The ramp is 33 feet long with a 180° landing.
Figure 1. Handicap Ramp

180° Landing Detail

RCRV

Completed ramp

Ramp side view

Frame top view

Post detail

6 to 8 ft typical
1:12 typical slope

34.5
2x6 stringer
30.5
2x4 toe board
60
36
5/4x6 flooring
87.5
42
two 2x4 toe boards
4x4 post
12x12x3/4 plywood base
sides with 4” max openings required if over 30”

Routed groove in 2x6

60
3.5
2x6 stringer
2x4 post
12x12x3/4 plywood base

6 to 8 ft typical
1:12 typical slope

Completed ramp

Ramp side view

Ramp framing

cross braces

beam
Figure 2. Handicap Ramp

Ramp Framing

Completed Ramp

Ramp top view

Ramp side view

cross braces
center post
no beam

beam
no center post
no cross brace

6 to 8 ft
typical

60

60

beam

cross brace 2x6

42

6 to 8 ft
typical

42

RCRV

90° Landing Detail

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rev 11/6/10
Attach post to End Post Bracket with screws

Attach End Ramp Assembly to post with screws

Attach stringer to post with screws

End Ramp Assembly
bottom view

Completed ramp

Stringer and post layout

End Post Bracket

Figure 3. Handicap Ramp
Ramp Bottom Termination

RCRV
End Ramp Assembly

3.5 x 9 x 0.125 steel plate

weld all edges

1.5 x 1.5 x 0.125 angle iron

End post bracket

2x4 toe board

5/4x6x42 floor boards
tapered edge on last board
tapered 2x6 stringer

end post bracket

22.5

1.8

3.5

7/32
6 holes

3.25

2

9

9

2

3

0.75

2

0.125

1.5

1.5

42

49

1.5

3.5 x 9 x 0.125 steel plate (2)

Ramp Bottom Termination

Figure 4. Handicap Ramp

RCRV

rev 11/6/10
Figure 5. Cedar Rapids building code handout

**STRAIGHT RUN RAMP FOR THE DISABLED**

1. Ramps shall have non-slip surfaces such as braid, finish or carborundum grit.
2. Handrails shall extend 12" beyond top & bottom of ramp.
Figure 6. End post bracket
Figure 7. Ramp end assembly, bottom view
Figure 8. Ramp end assembly inserted into end post bracket
Figure 9. Ramp frame with 180° landing. Notice cross bracing
Figure 10. Ramp frame
Figure 11. Stringers into Ramp end post assembly. Notice cross braces.
Figure 12. Ramp frame. Notice cross braces.

Figure 13. Completed ramp