

Advice and Information

Health and Safety

Wheelchair Risk Assessment

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Introduction

As highlighted in our advice leaflets focused on health and safety, risk assessments are of particular importance for community transport operators delivering accessible and inclusive transport solutions. In this leaflet we will concentrate on the process for risk assessing wheelchairs.

Community transport operators may transport personal mobility devices, such as scooters or buggies; and so CTA recommends that they ensure they obtain details about each make and model from the manufacturer's instructions or directly from the manufacturer as part of the risk assessment process. Before journeys are undertaken, operators should work together with the passenger and their representative/s to ensure that all the required information for their transport needs is recorded. This includes asking whether the passenger already has a passenger safety plan and/or a wheelchair passport .

You can reassure the wheelchair passenger that the risk assessment is being completed on their wheelchair to ensure you can transport them safely.

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Risk assessment process

Preliminary research

Carry out some research before you start. You can download a free copy of Workplace Transport Safety: an employers' guide from the Health and Safety Executive's website at

www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg136.htm.

An excellent resource to help community transport operators is the publication from the British Standards Institution, BS 8603: 2013 Code of Practice for Wheelchair Passport Schemes, available to purchase from the BSI shop at <http://shop.bsigroup.com>. This code was developed to meet the concerns for the safety of wheelchair-seated passengers during vehicular transportation and developed with input from a range of stakeholders including the CTA.

Find out about the wheelchair

The passenger or their representative should be involved in the risk assessment process from the beginning. They know the wheelchair and should have access to any paperwork you require.

If it's available, check the manufacturer's instructions for the make and model of wheelchair to ascertain:

- If the make/model is suitable for transportation.
- The wheelchair dimensions, including its weight, its height and length.
- Any attachments that it has (such as a tray).
- Whether it is a manual or powered wheelchair. If it is powered, find out how the power is turned off and how the clutch is disengaged and re-engaged.
- The location of the manufacturer's designated attachment points for restraint systems.

- Whether the model requires a specific type of restraint system, bearing in mind the weight or if it is a reclining specialist wheelchair.
- Whether it has a posture or lap belt system and who is responsible for ensuring the passenger is wearing the posture or lap belt.
- If this is the only wheelchair the passenger will use. If not, then assess any other wheelchairs too.
- If the passenger will be transferring to a vehicle seat. If so, whether they can do so safely, and how the wheelchair should be folded and secured while in transit.

Note that if the make or model of wheelchair does not meet the ISO 7176:19 standard, it should not be used to transport a passenger while they are seated in it – it is not suitable for use as a seat in a vehicle.

Identify any hazards

Look for what might cause harm to passengers, staff or volunteers, including slips, trips, falls, nips to fingers and hands (for example, when removing seats), strains or sprains, falling from height (such as the lift platform), or crushing (such as the passenger lift crushing a foot).

It is best for the person responsible for collating the risk assessment to walk through each task with their colleagues who assist passengers and their wheelchairs on to the vehicles. That way they can all discuss current activities, any issues and any precautions already adopted but perhaps not recorded.

At the passenger collection and destination points you should consider:

- Any stairs or obstacles: consider whether the wheelchair can be easily manoeuvred to and from the vehicle.
- Whether the vehicle can be parked on a flat surface with enough space to deploy the passenger lift or ramp.
- If the building has an elevator and if it is in good working order.

- Whether the wheelchair needs to be brought to or from the vehicle across a road or on to a busy road – the vehicle should be parked appropriately on the side of the road from which the passenger is being collected.
- If the passenger lift is suitable for both the wheelchair user and a staff member to travel on it together safely.
- If there are any animals at the premises (such as dogs).

This list is not exhaustive.

Decide who could be harmed and how

This could include the wheelchair passenger, other passengers, staff, the general public or others.

Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

- Consider whether staff have received information and training for relevant tasks. Is this recorded and documented? If necessary, provide the Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS) accessible module or additional training on use of equipment.
- Is there any information you need to record about the passenger, such as whether they can transfer to a seat safely unaided or whether they will travel in their wheelchair? Do they have any communication needs? What further precautions do you need to adopt to ensure the passenger gets the same standard of service every time?

Record and implement your findings

Ensure all staff are aware of your findings and receive information and training on any procedures that should be adopted. All staff and the wheelchair passenger should follow procedures to reduce risk.

Your organisation should have a written process of the actions to take if staff or passengers refuse or do not follow official procedures. Staff should be made aware that, under the Health and Safety at Work Act, it is their duty to ensure they follow any precautions defined by your organisation. You can

provide them with an official leaflet about this, Health and Safety Law: what you need to know, which you can download free from www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/law.pdf.

Review your assessment

Your assessment should be reviewed annually and updated as necessary in between. You should amend and update it when:

- The passenger changes wheelchair or collection/delivery address.
- Staff report any changes, problems or concerns with agreed procedures.
- Legislation, training or procedures are changed.

The CTA recommends that operators work in partnership with their wheelchair passengers to continue the safe provision of community transport solutions. Never transport a wheelchair unless you are confident you are using the right restraint system in the right way for the individual wheelchair.

Together we set the standards and our ongoing safety record is testimony to the careful consideration community transport continues to provide for all passengers.

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Further information

If the manufacturer's information on the individual wheelchair is not available, you can refer to the Research Institute for Consumer Affairs for information about powered wheelchairs or scooters via www.rica.org.uk/content/scooter-powered-wheelchair-search

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About the Community Transport Association

The Community Transport Association is a national charity that represents and supports providers of community transport: thousands of other local charities and community groups across the UK that all provide transport services that fulfil a social purpose and community benefit. We are for, and about, accessible and inclusive transport.

We help our members remain relevant and responsive to key areas of public policy and to make a big difference for the people and families in the communities in which they work. Our vision is of a world where people can shape and create their own accessible and inclusive transport solutions and our mission is to achieve this through championing accessible and inclusive transport, connecting people and ideas and by strengthening our members and raising standards.

Keep up to date with CTA via our website or by signing up to our monthly [News Brief](#).

About CTA's Advice Service

The CTA's Advice Service is available to CTA members, community and other voluntary groups, local authorities and other statutory bodies. It offers information and support on any aspect of non-profit transport operations. The CTA's Advice Service covers the whole of the UK and is supported by national governments. We will only ever explain the most accurate and commonly accepted interpretation of regulations and best practice. We do this by providing support and information on a wide range of community transport related topics such as permits and licensing regulations and by signposting to other agencies. The Advice Service does not exist to provide legal advice on any topics. If you are still unsure you will need to seek [legal advice](#).

For more information, contact

advice@ctauk.org | 0345 130 6195 | www.ctauk.org

This leaflet has been primarily produced for members of the CTA. If your organisation has benefited from using it but isn't a member please consider joining us, for more details please see: <https://ctauk.org/why-become-a-cta-member>.

Disclaimer:

The Community Transport Association has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, but it should be noted that this is only a guide, and should be treated as such.