

ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

(UPDATED OCTOBER 2025)

Policy

Soil Engineers Ltd. is committed to provide goods and services in a manner that respects the dignity, independence and integrity of people with disabilities. People with disabilities will be provided the same opportunity to access the company's services as other customers, and allow them the same benefit from the same service.

In fulfilling this commitment, Soil Engineers Ltd. shall:

- a) Ensure that communication with a person with a disability takes into consideration the person's disability and is conducted in a manner that respects his/her dignity; reasonable efforts shall be made to make Company contact information available for persons with disabilities to access, and to ensure that the information is conveyed, received and understood accurately by the customer when communicating with a Company staff,
- b) Accommodate persons with disabilities who use assistive devices, service animals or support persons to access its services in its premises,
- c) Make reasonable effort to provide notice when Company services are temporarily disrupted,
- d) Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how services to people with disabilities were rendered and how to respond to any feedback, and take action on any complaints, and,
- e) Train employees who interact with customers on the topics outlined in this policy.

Definitions

1. **Disability** – as defined in the Ontario Human Rights Code means:
 - a) Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impairment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
 - b) A condition of mental impairment or developmental disability
 - c) A learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
 - d) A mental disorder, or,
 - e) An injury or disability for which benefits are claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*.
2. **Persons with Disabilities** – individuals who have a disability as defined under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*

3. **Employees** – means every person who interacts with the public or customers on behalf of the Company
4. **Assistive Devices** – devices that persons with disabilities may bring with them or that are already in the premises to assist them in carrying out activities in accessing service; may include but are not limited to wheelchairs, walkers, walking canes, portable magnifiers, assistive listening device
5. **Service Animals** – are animals trained to perform a task to assist a person with disability
6. **Support Persons** – another person who accompanies a person with disability in order to help with communications, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to goods and services

Responsibilities

A. Management:

It is the responsibility of the managers/department heads and supervisors to insure that employees are trained and that they follow the guidelines set out in the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) and in this policy.

B. Employees:

Employees are expected to follow the contents of this policy and its programs.

Procedures

The Company provides professional consulting services, and by this nature, services are normally accessed by customers and potential new clients through direct contact with company staff either by phone, in person and/or written communication. Information about company services is available on the Company's website and commonly brought to the customers' awareness through referrals, networking and business associations with other professionals in our field of business. Customers and potential clients accessing the Company's services mostly interact with the Company through the use of telecommunication facilities, and on occasions, by visiting Company offices. In dealing with this public, the Company and its employees shall conduct themselves in ways that take into account the disabilities of persons with disabilities.

A. Communication

1. Company employees shall communicate with customers and clients in a way that allow persons with disability to effectively receive, understand, respond to and convey the message when requesting for or asking about Company services and/or ongoing services being provided to him/her.

When talking to persons with disabilities (e.g., hearing, vision, speech impairment) employees should speak clearly and directly to the person with disability, not to someone with them, and give the individual time to explain himself/herself.

2. Employees shall interact with customers with respect and courtesy when communicating either by phone, in writing or in person and use appropriate language and terminologies that respect the person's dignity.

Some disabilities are not readily visible; hence employees shall take time to know the individual's needs, provide reasonable accommodation to those needs and exercise patience in all dealings.

3. Telephone service for contacting the Company shall be made available 24 hours a day. Voice mail as well as email from customers shall be attended to promptly. As requested, and whenever necessary, alternative print formats (e.g. large print) for reports, brochures, pamphlets, invoices, etc, will be provided to customers and clients who are vision impaired.

B. Use of Assistive Devices

1. Customers with disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining Company services and/or transacting business in company premises.
2. There may be exceptions in situations where it is determined that the use of assistive device may pose a risk to health and safety of the customer with disability or with other persons in the area. In this case Company shall determine appropriate measures to assist the customer.
3. The customer is responsible for ensuring that his/her assistive device is operated in a safe manner at all times.

C. Use of Service Animals

1. Customers/clients may enter Company premises accompanied by a service animal and may keep the service animal with him/her except in areas otherwise excluded by law. If the service animal is excluded by law, the Company shall make available alternate means to enable the customer to access company services.
2. For health and safety reasons, guide dogs may not be permitted in the laboratory or kitchen areas.
3. Employees are not allowed to touch, communicate and/or interfere with the animal while it is doing its work.
4. The Customer shall maintain care and control of his/her service animal while in Company premises.
5. Service animals that were trained to perform tasks for persons with disabilities may be permitted.

D. Use of Support Persons

Support persons are permitted to go with any customer/client with disability in Company premises for the purpose of assisting the customer in obtaining Company services. Documented permission from the person with disability may be required to allow a support person in a private/confidential meeting or interview.

E. Disruption of Services

Company offices are closed during public holidays. For planned or expected disruption of its services, the Company shall provide advance notice on its website, voice messaging service and physical office locations. The notice shall include the anticipated duration of the disruption.

F. Training For Staff

The company shall provide information and training to all employees regarding this policy. The training shall include matters on how to interact with persons of various disabilities who access Company services.

G. Workplace Emergency Response Information for those with known Disabilities.

In the event of an emergency, in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the company shall:

1. Where appropriate, and with the employee's consent, share the emergency response information with designated personnel (the employee's manager, supervisor or fire warden) to assist during an emergency.
2. If the accommodation involves alternative building access (accessible exit or stairs), coordinate with building property management to make arrangement, where possible.
3. Distribute to employees the emergency evacuation plan and fire route as part of the emergency preparedness procedure.
4. A personal emergency plan may be developed for employees with disabilities, who have stated they require assistance during emergency. This plan may include designated personnel helping to assist or contacting their emergency contact in an emergency.

H. Receiving and Addressing Feedback

Comments and feedback about how Company services were delivered to customers with disabilities are welcome and appreciated. Feedback may be given by telephone, email, in person, in writing or other means. The company shall collect and respond to such feedback and promptly address items that require immediate action from management.