

The Federal Aviation Administration Advisory Circular 5360-14A, Access to Airports by Individuals with Disabilities

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The aviation industry is faced with fast growing segment of passengers with service animals. In fact, frequently passengers with the service animals are facing challenge of finding location to relieve dogs at the airports. Many service animals need to use relief areas during short layover, so location and size must be as efficient as possible. To address the problem, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is updating the Advisory Circular to assist airports in designing service animal relief areas, also known as SARA.

The FAA held Service Animal Relief Areas at the Airports, conference on April 10, 2014, in Washington DC, in order to discuss proposed design standards for service animal relief areas at airports. Organizational representatives and other consumers were invited. Service and guide dog handlers from across the nation attended. The FAA used comments from the meeting participants to help finalize standards for service animal relief areas. The FAA Office of the Airports also sent survey questions to various stakeholder groups asking about service animal relief areas at airports. The input received was on:

- Location and Distance
- Wayfinding and Signing
- Size and Dimensions
- Surfaces
- Other considerations.

The initiative resulted in recommendation for standardizing service animal relief areas at airports. Some recommendations are: The design transit time from any gate to a SARA should be no more than 15 minutes, based on a walking pace of 220 ft/min. Any expected time spent using transportation vehicles and waiting time for an escort or elevators is included in this total transit time; A SARA should have at least two different surfaces. One should be hard and located immediately inside the entrance, to allow wheelchair access. This surface should be delineated in a manner to indicate the portion intended to be traversed by people, and the portion intended for animal relief. The other should be gravel for outside and artificial exposed aggregate for inside. Artificial turf is not recommended, as it harbors odors and bacteria, and is often perceived as carpet by service animals, which will be reluctant to use it. Avoid surfaces such as sand that will stick to paws and be tracked outside the SARA. Dark colored surfaces should not be used where exposed to the sun, as they can become unbearably hot; outdoor relief area must be protected from the elements; entirely enclosed to allow guide dog user to let dogs free if needed; artificial hydrant (beneficial for male dogs that prefer a vertical structure also serves as a visual landmark for the relief areas); accessible doors, braille signs, assistance buttons and communication devices; trash containers should be placed at the entrance to the relief area to ensure that handlers can find them on exiting. Other guidance: Airport operators are encouraged to adopt state of the art technology (e.g. smart phone applications) as it becomes available.