

ADA Compliance Best Practices (Read 1st)

Creating an accessible and user-friendly website that also adheres to ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance is crucial to ensure equal access and usability for everyone.

Rural Water and Municipal Impact websites are user-friendly and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) upon launch. As a subscriber adds to or updates their website content, it is the subscriber's responsibility to ensure the website remains ADA compliant and accessible to all users. This tutorial does not cover all aspects of ADA Compliance. Instead, it highlights a few key points that we believe will be most helpful to our subscribers. A local government's failure to comply with ADA regulations may have legal consequences.

[Obtain more information on website accessibility and ADA compliance here.](#)

Page and Content Headings

Proper hierarchical use of headings is important for ADA compliance because it provides a clear content structure that assistive technologies like screen readers can easily interpret and navigate through. Best practice is to always use an H1 heading first, and never use more than one H1 per page. Rural Water and Municipal Impact websites automatically assign the H1 style to the page title, so the choices for additional heading styles on a page start with H2. See below for examples of heading sizes in hierarchical order.

Header - H2

Header - H3

Header - H4

Header - H5

Header - H6

NOTE: Typically, the heading style choices are already bold. You do not need to add additional bold style, unless you just want to.


Best practice is not to skip header levels even if a smaller header looks better. Assign headers by outline hierarchy, not by font size. Please see the **Help** section for the **How to Change Heading Size in a Text Box** tutorial.

[Obtain more information on page and content headers here.](#)

Images

Images must be saved and uploaded as JPGs. Every image in your website's **My Slideshow** and **My Images** must have an image description. Use descriptive alternative text (alt text) for images and buttons to describe what is visible in the image. This text is not visible to most users, but is required for ADA compliance because it's used for assistive technologies such as screen readers for blind users. If there is any important text in the image, that text should be included in the image description.

For example, **the image description** (required) for a Drought Contingency slide might be "cracked earth with words Drought Contingency Stage 1 - In Effect". **The caption** (optional) of an image might be "Drought Contingency Stage 1 - In Effect".

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| File 1:  | Caption: | Image Description *: |
| | <input type="text" value="Drought Contingency Stage 1 - In Effect"/> | <input type="text" value="cracked earth with words Drought Cont"/> |

Links

Hyperlinks or URLs must be self-explanatory - specific and descriptive.

For example, do not link the words "Click Here". Instead, link the words "Read July Council Agenda".

"Contact Us" and "Office Hours" Statements

A statement asking the viewer to contact the office must include a phone number and/or an email address.

A statement telling the viewer to come to the office during office hours must include those office hours.

Documents Published on Your Website

Documents must be saved and uploaded as PDFs. For example, always click "Save As" a PDF when saving a Word document. Scanning a document and saving it as a PDF is not ADA compliant because scanning a document saves it as an image. **See Help Section for How to Convert a Word Document to PDF.**

PDFs must be indexable, searchable, machine readable and platform independent. A scanned PDF is not indexable, searchable, machine readable and platform independent. Also, a scanned PDF can be a larger file size which may pose challenges for users with slower internet connections or limited bandwidth.

When a document must be scanned (for example, a signed document is required for publishing on the website), the ILovePDF.com website has an OCR (optical character recognition) option to convert the scanned PDF to an ADA Compliant PDF. **See Help Section for How to OCR a Scanned PDF.**

Obtain more information about PDF documents using the links below.

[Read more about PDF Accessibility here.](#)

[Read about Adobe PDF here.](#)

[Read about how to create and verify PDFs with Acrobat Pro here.](#)

Copy/Paste

Avoid copying and pasting pre-formatted content to your website. For example, do not copy and paste content from Microsoft Word documents to your website. Microsoft Word content contains hidden HTML code that will change or distort formatting when copied or published to your website.

If you paste text from another source (for example, from Word) into your text box, it's best to paste the text into the Windows Notepad or Mac Notes text editor first. You do not have to save it as a file, just paste it into a blank page in Notepad or Notes to remove all formatting code added by the source of the text. Highlight and copy the text you just pasted, then paste it into your text box.

Some text can be successfully pasted without formatting codes into a text box by pressing Ctrl-Shift-V (Windows) or Cmd-Opt-Shift-V (Mac), but the Notepad and Notes text editors work well consistently.

Video/Audio

Closed captioning or video transcriptions are required for videos with audio content. Many video services do this automatically. It is a good idea to check the quality of the closed captioning.

Obtain more information about Video/Audio using the links below.

[Read about video content here.](#)

[Read about YouTube closed captions here.](#)

[Read about YouTube transcripts here.](#)

[Read about Vimeo closed captions and subtitles here.](#)

Accessibility Statement

Review your website's **My Policies** Accessibility Statement and make any necessary changes you need per your State and Federal Guidelines. We recommend that you and your staff read and share your website's **My Policies** with your legal team to ensure it covers everything you wish to convey to meet your state guidelines. If you wish to change that statement on your website, you can access it by logging into your Client Dashboard and clicking **My Policies** on the left side of your screen.

[More information regarding accessibility, usability and inclusion](#)

If you have questions about this tutorial or need additional assistance with your website, please click the **CONTACT SUPPORT** button on the left side of your website's Client Dashboard. Complete the form to tell us how we can help, then click Submit. Or you may call us at (888) 551-4815. **We are here to help!**