



## DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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### INTERPRETIVE OPINION

Pursuant to §103-50, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), all public buildings, facilities and sites constructed by, or on behalf of the State or any county, shall conform to the 2004 Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (2004 ADAAG) and amendments. In accordance to HRS §103-50 and Chapter 11-216, Hawaii Administrative Rules, the Disability and Communication Access Board has authority to issue interpretive opinions to HRS §103-50 design standards.

**Docket: DCAB 2021-02 Are recessed elements with mounting flanges that protrude from the face of the wall or partition permitted to be within grab bar clearances and/or behind grab bars?**

**Summary:** Recessed plumbing fixtures and/or toilet accessories typically have mounting flanges that are needed to fully recess the fixture/accessory into the wall. Since the mounting flange has a thickness, the recessed fixture/accessory is not flush with the face of the wall, limiting the mounting locations in an accessible toilet or bathing room.

Typically, manufactured wall (or partition) recessed toilet accessories or plumbing fixtures have a “mounting” flange of some sort that is needed to secure the unit to the wall. Due to this “mounting” flange, it is very unlikely that the unit will be flush with the wall (or partition) surface.

ADAAG 609.3 specifies the minimum distance for protruding objects from the top and bottom of the grab bar gripping surface and specifies the absolute distance between the grab bar and the wall. There are no minimum distances specified for recessed objects. No minimum protrusion amount is indicated in the verbiage, so the implication is that protrusions of any amount are not permitted within the grab bar clearances or between the grab bar and the wall.

The United States Access Board has mentioned that some flange is a necessity when recessing controls and dispensers, and that it is unlikely that a flange will be flush with the wall surface. The ADA Standards do allow for construction and manufacturing tolerances if there is not both a minimum and maximum requirement. The requirement for spacing of shower controls from the grab bar is 1½” minimum. There is no maximum distance, so tolerances are permitted.

If tolerances weren’t permitted, then you would never get recessed dispensers that are behind a grab bar. Recessed objects behind grab bars are expected, figure 609.3 (b) shows that clearance is not needed for recessed objects.

Ruling: For buildings or facilities subject to HRS §103-50,

**ADAAG Section 609.3 Spacing**

Where wall or partition mounted elements are provided and located such that:

- 1) The entire recessed element or a portion of the recessed element is within a required grab bar clearance,  
OR
- 2) The recessed element goes behind a required grab bar

The “mounting” flange may protrude:

- 1) Into the top or bottom grab bar clearance
- 2) Into the space between the grab bar and wall surface

The amount of protrusion from the face of the “mounting” flange to the wall surface shall be within the industry standard for that component and be no greater than a quarter inch ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ”). Protrusions beyond the face of the “mounting” flange within the grab bar clearance are not allowed unless specifically permitted in ADAAG 609.3.

[Rul: 09/09/2021] (Auth and Imp: HRS §103-50)

If you have any questions or comments regarding this ruling, please call us at 586-8121.  
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