

General Information about SAH Minimum Property Requirements

Minimum Property Requirements (MPRs) are absolute conditions specified under governing law for the Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant.

38 United States Code (U.S.C.), Chapter 21 or 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 36.4401 through 36.4410 mandates that any housing unit acquired, constructed, or remodeled using proceeds from the SAH grant program must:

- comply with the MPRs, and
- include features necessary to accommodate the Veteran's disabilities.

Required Areas

In order to obtain grant approval, the following areas must satisfy the MPRs detailed in Appendix A:

- points of ingress and egress,
- primary bathroom, and
- primary bedroom/sleeping area

Exception

Adherence to MPRs is excused when compliance is not feasible and the Veteran requests an MPR waiver that is approved by the Regional Loan Center (RLC). There is a need for flexibility and the exercise of judgment based on the physical abilities and limitations of each Veteran. In some instances, the nature of a Veteran's condition may obviate the necessity for a specific MPR. In these limited situations, the Regional Loan Center (RLC) may approve an MPR waiver request from the Veteran.

Note: Because MPRs are limited to three specific areas, MPR waivers should be the exception, not the norm. **Moreover, MPR waivers should be based on feasibility and need, not personal preference.**

SAH Minimum Property Requirements: Ingress and Egress Requirements

Number and Location

An adapted housing unit must have a minimum of two ingress and egress points that satisfy the MPRs presented in this section. The location and types of ingress and egress points are determined by the topography, floor plan, and Veteran preference. However, at a minimum, the two ingress and egress points must:

- provide a proximate means of emergency egress from the primary, adapted bedroom/sleeping area, and
- be located at different locations within the house.

It is preferable that the emergency egress location be directly from the primary, adapted bedroom/sleeping area. **If this is not possible**, the emergency egress must be proximate to the primary, adapted bedroom/sleeping area. It must also be free of potential fire hazards and not pass through, or originate in, an area prone to potential fire hazards such as the kitchen, garage, utility room, or any room containing a heat source. Additional instructions regarding bedroom window egress requirements are provided in Appendix A, Section 4.

Doorway & Entrance Requirements

All doorways that are adapted ingress and egress routes must:

- have a minimum width of 36 inches, and
- have a beveled threshold with a maximum height of ½ inch.

Types of Ingress & Egress

There are several types of ingress and egress that satisfy MPRs. They may be used interchangeably:

- no-step entry,
- vertical platform lift (VPL),
- elevator, or
- ramp or walkway.

No-Step Entry

A no-step entry may be sufficient when topography and grading eliminate the need for a ramp, lift or elevator (e.g. a housing unit built on slab). The no-step entry must meet the doorway and entrance requirements discussed earlier in this section. For entries in which the difference between the exterior grade/elevation and the interior/finished floor elevation is less than 4 inches,

a transition is acceptable and a 5-foot by 5-foot platform accompanied by a ramp is unnecessary. The transition must be:

- immobile,
- constructed of a durable material other than wood,
- provide unimpeded ingress/egress, and
- complement the Veteran's condition and choice of wheelchair.

VPL

A VPL is a mechanical device capable of providing a vertical means of ingress and egress in locations where ramps are not feasible due to topography or space constraints. The weight capacity and lift height vary by model and manufacturer; however, a VPL must:

- have a platform with a minimum usable width of 36 inches by 48 inches, and
- be connected to a continuous power source such as a generator or battery back-up.

Elevator

Elevators, either internal or external, are also capable of providing a vertical means of ingress/egress. An elevator must have the following:

- a car with minimum interior dimensions of 48 inches by 48 inches,
- a 36-inch wide entry door/opening,
- a connection to a continuous power source such as a generator or battery back-up, and
- be equipped with a land line telephone to communicate with emergency personnel in case of entrapment caused by a power outage or mechanical failure.

Note: The Veteran should notify local emergency personnel, if applicable, of his/her dependence on an elevator as a means of ingress/egress. This is an added safety measure in the event of complete power/mechanical failure and loss of telephone connectivity.

Ramps & Walkways

Ramps and walkways should be constructed of concrete, masonry, wood, metal, or composite materials and must:

- be permanently installed;
- have a minimum width of 42 inches (existing) or 48 inches (new); and
- be constructed in a manner that prevents slipping in wet or icy conditions (e.g. broom finish for concrete surfaces, ¼ inch spacing between deck boards, metal grating, or built-in heating coils).

For ramps or walkways that are more than 4 inches above grade and that cannot be constructed in a way to eliminate accidental falling, a low curb or guardrail on both sides with a minimum of 5" is required.

Note: This requirement can usually be avoided by backfilling soil along the walkway to provide a reasonably level transition between the walkway and adjacent soil.

Ramps and walkways must also have:

- A slope of eight percent or less (i.e. for every 1 inch of rise there is 12.5 inches of run or more)
- A handrail that meets the following criteria:
 - installed at a height convenient to the Veteran,
 - minimum diameter of 1-1/2 inches,
 - clearance from mounting surface of 1-1/2 inches to 2 inches,
 - smooth continuous surface, and
 - installed on both sides of the ramp with a minimum of 42 inches of clearance between handrails.
- A platform that meets the following criteria:
 - located at any wheelchair entrance,
 - provided at every 30 feet or less of continuous ramp,
 - located at turns in the ramp greater than 45 degrees,
 - minimum size of 5 feet by 5 feet unhindered by handrails or gutters,
 - constructed of non-slip materials, and
 - have a reasonably level surface.

If the slope of the ramp/walkway is less than five percent, a handrail is not required. However, the ramp/walkway must have a low curb/guard rail on both sides with a minimum height of 5 inches if the ramp/walkway is more than 4 inches above grade. See the note above about using backfill to avoid this requirement.

Important: It is acceptable to use an existing modular ramp provided by Prosthetics and Sensory Aids as one of the approved ingress and egress points, as long as the condition of the ramp is deemed safe by the SAH Agent. However, new modular ramps must be permanently installed and meet the MPRs discussed in this section.

SAH Minimum Property Requirements: Primary Bathroom Requirements

Number & Location

At a minimum, an adapted housing unit must have one fully adapted bathroom that satisfies the MPRs presented in this section. The primary, adapted bathroom must be in a location that is convenient and accessible for the Veteran.

Required Features

The following features are required in an adapted bathroom:

- roll-in shower,
- accessible sink,
- accessible toilet,
- accessible floor area, and
- 36-inch wide entry door.

Roll-In Shower

The roll-in shower must have the following features:

- minimum interior dimensions of 48 inches x 48 inches,
- a minimum opening of 36 inches,
- non-slip flooring with a coefficient of friction (DCOF) of 0.42 or greater,
- a maximum floor slope of ¼ inch to 12 inches (i.e. 1-inch slope from front to rear in a 48-inch deep roll-in shower),
 - at least one grab bar per wall placed at a location convenient to the Veteran and capable of supporting the Veteran's weight,
 - at least one hand held shower head, and
 - accessible, thermostatic or pressure-balance controls to avoid sudden changes in water temperature.

Accessible Sink

The adapted bathroom must be equipped with at least one roll-under, wall hung, or pedestal sink that is accessible. The width, height, and depth of the sink should be convenient for the Veteran. Any exposed pipes must be wrapped, or covered, in case of accidental contact by the Veteran.

Accessible Toilet

Toilets must have:

- a 48-inch clear front transfer space or a 36-inch clear side transfer space, and
- a minimum of one grab bar installed at a location that is convenient to the Veteran.

Note: Although only one grab bar is required at the toilet, the Veteran should be encouraged to install as many as needed. The height and type of toilet should be determined by the Veteran.

Accessible Floor Area

Floor areas must:

- allow at least one clear area for maneuvering with a minimum diameter of 5 feet (the turning area may extend into the roll-in shower), and
- be non-slip in both wet and dry conditions with a DCOF of 0.42 or greater.

Entry Door

Entry doors to the adapted bathroom must:

- have a minimum opening of 36 inches,
- not intrude on the accessible floor area (i.e. doors must swing outward or slide, such as a pocket door), and
- not obstruct wheelchair maneuvering when open.

SAH Minimum Property Requirements: Primary Bedroom/Sleeping Area Requirements

Number & Location

At a minimum, an adapted housing unit must have one adapted bedroom/sleeping area that satisfies the MPRs presented in this section.

Required Features

The following features are required in an adapted bedroom/sleeping area:

- 36-inch wide entry door,
- sufficient space for maneuvering,
- accessible flooring, and
- proximate emergency egress.

Entry Doors

Entry doors to the primary adapted bedroom/sleeping area must:

- have a minimum opening of 36 inches, and
- not obstruct wheelchair maneuvering when open.

Sufficient Space

The primary adapted bedroom/sleeping area must be sufficient enough in size to accommodate furniture while allowing the Veteran freedom of movement.

Flooring

The flooring type must:

- not impede wheelchair maneuverability, and
- be low pile, closely woven and padded with a durable fiber type, if carpeted.

Emergency Egress

As previously discussed, the primary adapted bedroom/sleeping area must, whenever possible, be equipped with an emergency egress point. If this is not possible, and the emergency egress point is proximate rather than direct, the primary adapted bedroom/sleeping area must have a window of sufficient size to allow access by emergency personnel. Local building code requirements should be consulted to establish acceptable design parameters.

Minimum Property Requirements for Condominiums and Townhouses

Introduction

This topic contains information about condominium and townhouse requirements, including:

- requirements for units above the first floor,
- ingress and egress,
- evacuations and safety considerations, and
- windows and balconies.

Important: Primary bathroom and bedroom/sleeping area MPRs apply to condominiums and townhouses as described in the previous section.

Requirements for Units Located Above the First Floor

If a Veteran resides in a condominium or townhouse, it is preferable that the unit be located on the first floor. However, if the unit is located above the first floor, the following areas must be addressed:

- ingress and egress,
- emergency access,
- windows, and
- balconies.

Ingress & Egress

At least one suitable means of access must be provided so the Veteran has a level ingress and egress point from the condominium or townhouse. In the absence of a level ingress/egress point, it may be necessary to utilize ramps, platforms, or elevators to eliminate any elevation difference between interior and exterior floor levels.

Note: Condominiums or townhouses located above the first floor only require a single SAH MPR compliant exit.

Windows

At least one window must be of sufficient size to allow access by emergency personnel. Local building code requirements should be consulted to establish acceptable design parameters.

Balconies

Veterans should be encouraged to purchase a condominium or townhouse with balconies that are accessible to emergency personnel and the Veteran.

Evacuations & Safety Considerations

Access Requirement

Exterior Emergency Access

- The condominium or townhouse unit must be accessible using firefighting and evacuation equipment from the exterior of the unit.
- The location of the Veteran's condominium or townhouse unit must be registered with local emergency personnel. No unit may be located beyond the reach of the highest evacuation ladder system available to local emergency personnel. The SAH Agent must verify the capabilities of local emergency personnel servicing the Veteran's property and upload supporting documentation in the system.

Interior Emergency Access

- If the Veteran is completely bedridden, the condominium or townhouse unit must contain an externally mounted device (audible, visible, etc.) which aids emergency personnel in locating the Veteran.
- The Veteran's bedroom window must:
 - be of sufficient size to allow access by emergency personnel, and
 - have exterior markings to guide emergency personnel.