

Jacqui Russell
Head of Consumer Policy
Email: ATP@orr.gov.uk



Operator Accessibility Leads
By email

12 December 2025

Dear industry colleagues,

Provision of wheelchair spaces – reminder for operators of key regulatory standards

For wheelchair users to access and travel safely on our rail network, stations and trains need to be accessible to them. Provision of wheelchair spaces on all passenger trains, to which wheelchair users always have priority, is one key enabler.

Several complementary regulatory standards require operators to provide wheelchair spaces and ensure they are available to wheelchair users when required. These are:

- [Accessible Travel Policy Guidance](#)
- [Rail Vehicle Accessibility \(Non-Interoperable Rail System\) Regulations 2010 \(RVAR\)](#)
- [Accessibility National Technical Specification Notice \(ACC-NTSN\)](#)

We have recently engaged with a number of operators on aspects of compliance with these standards. To support all operators' understanding of the standards, we have summarised the regulatory standards below.

This letter replaces the letter on Provision of wheelchair spaces issued by ORR on 14 October. The amendments clarify that the intent of the letter is to remind operators of key regulatory standards.

Summary of key regulatory standards

The design standards (RVAR and ACC-NTSN) define the minimum number of wheelchair spaces that must be provided on a train and define how these mandatory spaces must be designed for wheelchair users. Dual or multi-use design is not permitted, except as provided for in the standards. For example, an overhead luggage rack, an openable window, a handrail and fold-down seats are permitted.

The design standards do therefore allow for another passenger to use the space when it is not required by a wheelchair user. That is, the standards allow fold-down seats to be installed in the wheelchair space. ORR considers that, as a matter of practicality, this also allows passengers to keep their belongings with them. However, a passenger must give up this wheelchair space to a wheelchair user, including removing any belongings from the space.

The Accessible Travel Policy Guidance requires operators to make every reasonable effort to ensure that wheelchair users are able to use wheelchair spaces. If an operator chooses to allow other passengers to travel in a wheelchair space, the responsibility sits with the operator to ensure that the passenger and their belongings are able to, and in practice do, move promptly for a wheelchair user. Good practice is to ensure that adequate storage space for belongings is provided elsewhere in the vehicle.

Wheelchair spaces are provided for the use of wheelchair users who will always have priority to use the spaces, and the onus is on the operator to ensure that they are able to do so.

Next steps

Operators should assure themselves that they are taking appropriate steps to secure compliance with the regulatory standards. We will continue to engage with operators bilaterally on a targeted basis where there is evidence of potential non-compliance with the standards.

Please email ATP@orr.gov.uk if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

Jacqui Russell

Jacqui Russell