



# Soo Mill and Lumber Company Ltd. Accessible Customer Service Policy

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA 2005)

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Approved By: D. Lynn Hollingsworth, President  
**Soo Mill and Lumber Company Ltd.**

# Table of Contents

Purpose .....	1
Scope .....	1
Definitions and Accompanying Policy .....	2
Person with a Disability:.....	2
Communicating with Persons with Disabilities.....	2
Policy .....	2
Support Person.....	3
Policy .....	3
Service Animal.....	4
Policy .....	4
Assistive Devices .....	5
Policy .....	5
Notice of Service Disruption.....	6
Policy .....	6
Feedback.....	6
Policy .....	7
Training .....	8
Policy .....	8
Timeline for Training .....	9
Training Records.....	10
Notice of the Availability of Documents and Format of Documents.....	11
Policy .....	11
Modifications to this and future policies .....	12
Appendix A: Sample Document.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Appendix B: Sample Document.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Appendix C: Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities Feedback Form .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

## Purpose

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 is Provincial legislation that sets out Standards of compliance to ensure that services provided to Ontarians with disabilities is accessible and provided in a manner that uses reasonable efforts consistent with the core principles of:

**Dignity** – services are provided in a respectful manner consistent with the needs of the individual.

**Independence** – services for persons with disabilities shall support their independence while respecting their right to safety and personal privacy.

**Integration** – allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same service, in the same place and in a similar way.

**Equality of Opportunity** – persons with disabilities are given the same opportunity to benefit from the services provided as other clients.

## Scope

Accessible Customer Service will be provided by all employees who communicate with the public, all management and program staff who develop our policies and procedures, all contractors, sub-trades and any third parties we may contract with.

Our intent is to ensure all persons with disabilities receive customer service in a manner that takes into consideration their disability and offers excellence in customer service.

## Note

Section 6(1) of the Regulation requires Soo Mill and Lumber Company Ltd. (Soo Mill) to ensure that *"every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the provider, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise"* is trained about providing goods or services to people with disabilities.

Other third parties might include:

- consultants
- contractors and sub-trades
- suppliers (provide demonstrations)
- trainers

Soo Mill will ensure all third party service providers meet this requirement of the Standard.

## **Definitions and Accompanying Policy**

### **Person with a Disability:**

The definition of disability under the AODA is the same as the definition of disability in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Section 2 states that "Disability" means;

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- d) a mental disorder; or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

## **Communicating with Persons with Disabilities**

Communication is a process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information. This section of the regulation is a specific requirement to communicate with an individual with a disability in a way that takes the person's disability into account. This means that you must consider how the disability affects the way that the person expresses, receives or processes communications. The goal is to communicate in an effective way.

### **Policy**

When communicating with a person with a disability, Soo Mill will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

Soo Mill and Lumber Company Ltd. is committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our customers. Staff will be trained to communicate with customers over the telephone in clear and plain language, to speak clearly and slowly and to tailor their responses as much as possible in support of the individual.

Access for persons who are deaf is available by Bell Relay Service. All staff are trained on how to use this system and proper etiquette when using it.

Soo Mill will offer to communicate with customers by other means, including relay service or e-mail, if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

## **Support Person**

*A person who accompanies a person with a disability to assist him or her.* A support person can be a professional, a family member, a friend, or other person who assists a person with a disability with communication, mobility, personal care, or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

## **Policy**

A support person is a trusted individual chosen by a person with a disability who assists with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods and services. Soo Mill is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person.

The customer shall determine whether a support person is necessary; however, in the exceptional circumstance where an employee believes that a support person should be in attendance to protect the health and safety of the customer or others the following criteria shall be used in consulting with the customer:

- When there is a significant risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or others (the mere possibility of risk is insufficient).
- When the risk is greater than the risk associated with other customers.
- When the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced by other means.
- When the assessment of the risk is based on consideration of the duration of the risk, the nature and severity of the potential harm, the likelihood that the potential harm will occur, and the imminence of the potential harm.
- When the assessment of the risk is based on the individual's actual characteristics, not merely on generalizations, misperceptions, ignorance or fears about a disability.

*Please note that Soo Mill would only request a support person on an exceptionally rare occasion.*

## **Service Animal**

Service animals are used by people with many different kinds of disabilities. Examples of service animals include dogs used by people who are blind; hearing alert animals for people who are Deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing; and animals trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety.

A service animal is defined in the Act as:

*"Any animal where it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability and if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse or other government issued certification confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability."*

## **Policy**

Persons with a disability, accompanied by a service animal are welcome at Soo Mill

If in an unusual circumstance at an event outside of Soo Mill's business office, a service animal is excluded by law, Soo Mill will ensure that alternate means are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use, or benefit from the services of Soo Mill

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, i.e. a guide dog with visible harness, Soo Mill will use extreme discretion in asking the person with a disability to confirm the animal is a service animal by:

- Asking if the animal is a service animal.
- If concern or inappropriate animal behaviour ask for confirmation letter from a physician or nurse of service animal or identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada or a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

## **Assistive Devices**

Personal assistive devices are usually devices that people bring with them, such as, walkers, personal oxygen tanks, magnification devices, wheelchairs, canes, or other mobility devices that assist the person with daily living.

### **Policy**

Persons with disabilities shall be permitted to obtain, use, or benefit from goods or services through the use of their own assistive devices.

Staff will be trained and become familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our services.

Soo Mill will also ensure that staff knows how to use the assistive devices which are available on our premises, including electronic door openers.

Exceptions may occur in situations where Soo Mill has determined that the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of a person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises.

In these situations and others Soo Mill may offer a person with a disability other reasonable measures to assist them in obtaining, using, and benefiting from the services of Soo Mill where other measures are available.

It should be noted that it is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that their assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

## Notice of Service Disruption

The Standard requires that notice to the public be provided when there is a temporary disruption (planned or unexpected) of facilities or services that are usually used by people with disabilities to access goods or services. This notice must include the reason for the disruption, its duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available and posted in an obvious place

## Policy

Soo Mill is aware that the operation of its services and facilities is important to the public. However, temporary disruptions in our services and facilities may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within Soo Mill's control or knowledge. Examples of this could be "snow days", disruptions in power/heat beyond our control.

Soo Mill will make reasonable efforts to provide prior notice of planned disruption if possible, recognizing that in some circumstances, such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruption (snow storms), advance notice will not be possible. In such cases, Soo Mill will provide notice as soon as possible.

In the event of a **planned**, temporary service disruption that would limit a person with a disability from gaining access to our office, goods, or service, Soo Mill will post a notice or otherwise make the disruption known to customers in the following methods and places:

- Website home page
- Reader Board
- Notice on entrance doors

In the event of an **unplanned**, temporary service disruption that would limit a person with a disability from gaining access to our office, goods, or service, Soo Mill will post a notice or otherwise make the disruption known to customers in the following method and places:

- Notice on entrance doors

## Feedback

The customer service standard requires that a process be in place for receiving and responding to feedback about how you provide goods or services to people with disabilities.

## Policy

Soo Mill is committed to providing high quality services to all members of the public it serves. At Soo Mill we regard feedback as “a gift” as it helps us to identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements. Feedback from a member of the public about the delivery of services to persons with disabilities may be given by telephone, in person, in writing, in electronic format or through other methods.

Information about the feedback process is readily available to the public and notice of the process will be posted on Soo Mill’s website and/or in other appropriate locations.

All feedback will be kept in strict confidence and used to improve customer service. If action is required, or a response necessary, the author of the feedback will be provided a prompt response, within 10 business days, in the format in which the feedback was received outlining actions deemed appropriate, if any.

Feedback will be reviewed at each staff meeting to review and monitor our progress. Should feedback include individual staff members, management will meet with staff member to discuss/remedy.

Feedback mechanisms:

- Print format Accessible Customer Service Questionnaire at the Customer Service counters area available at all Soo Mill locations.
- Online Accessible Customer Service questionnaire under “Our Services” tab on Soo Mill website. [www.soomill.com](http://www.soomill.com)
- By telephone to our main branch (705)759-0533, and speaking with a member of the Management Team
- In writing to:       Soo Mill and Lumber Company Limited  
                          539 Great Northern Road  
                          Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6B 5A1

## **Training**

The Accessible Customer Service Standards requires providers to train staff on how to provide customer service to people with disabilities. Training should help to dispel myths, misconceptions, stereotypes and fears about people with disabilities

Training must include:

- A review of the purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard.
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disability.
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device, service animal or a support person.
- How to use the equipment or assistive devices available on your premises or that you otherwise provide that may help with the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities.
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing your goods or services.

Under the Act training must be provided to:

- Every person who deals with the public or other third parties on your behalf receives training, whether the person is an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.
- Every person who participates in developing your policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties is trained.
- New staff who deal with members of the public or other third parties or who participate in developing your policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services to the public or other third parties in accordance with the training requirements set out in the standard. New hires will participate in accessibility training as part of their New Hire Orientation.
- Ongoing training in connection with any changes to your policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities.

## **Policy**

Soo Mill will ensure that all staff, who interact with our customers or create policy/procedures, are trained as required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. Ongoing training to ensure excellence in the way we serve our customers with disabilities will be conducted with additional training and awareness as part of monthly staff meetings. The content of the training will include:

- Overall review to ensure and build on awareness of the purposes of the AODA.
- The specific requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07).
- Instruction on Soo Mill Accessible Customer Service policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities; and how to interact and communicate with persons with disabilities.
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing our services.
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or who require the assistance of a support person or service animal.
- Information about the equipment or devices available on the premises of Soo Mill that may help with the provision of services to persons with disabilities.
- Ongoing training during monthly staff meetings.
- Ongoing awareness sessions with other disability service providers to gain additional awareness and insight.

### **Third Party Service Providers (Contractors, Sub-trades, Suppliers)**

A requirement in the regulation is that any person or organization that provides goods or services to customers on behalf of the Soo Mill must receive training on providing accessible customer service.

Businesses and individuals that the Soo Mill has contracted to provide goods or services to customers must ensure that their employees are trained on providing accessible customer service.

### **Timeline for Training**

Training will be provided as a priority for new hires and included in new employee orientation package. New employees will be required to complete the Accessible Customer Service online training module "Serve-Ability" and receive training on Soo Mill's Accessible Customer Service Policy.

Ongoing training will be provided to all staff to ensure ongoing learning, development and employee engagement in providing exception service to our customers.

Training will also be provided with any change to Soo Mill's policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of services to persons with disabilities.

## **Training Records**

Soo Mill will keep records of all Accessible Customer Service training, to include dates and content of training provided to each employee.

Provision of Accessible Customer Service to persons with disabilities will be reviewed with each staff member at all performance evaluations.

# Notice of the Availability of Documents and Format of Documents

## Policy

Soo Mill will notify customers by posting notice of availability of documents in conspicuous place on our premises.

Our policy and procedures in providing documentation are:

- When providing a document to a person with a disability Soo Mill will provide the document, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes the person's disability into account. Staff is instructed to ask our customer if they require information/documentation in an alternative format.
- All forms, documents, and materials will include "Alternative formats available upon request".
- **As a work in progress**, all existing forms and documents will be made accessible in the following formats:
  - Large print
  - Web accessibility
  - All existing in-house forms that would be normally available for the public will be reviewed for "plain language" content and revised where necessary
  - Any future in-house forms that would normally be available for the public will be created with plain language

Soo Mill uses many governmental documents and requests alternative formats of all documents when ordering materials from a Provincial or Federal program.

A copy of any of our documents is available to anyone who asks for them.

## **Modifications to this and future policies**

Soo Mill is committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

Therefore, any changes made to this policy will consider the needs of people with disabilities.

Any policy of Soo Mill that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

