



Improving wheelchair safety

How the new Wheelchair Passport Scheme is making travel for wheelchair users safer and more convenient

Challenge

Operators cannot afford to take any chances with safety when transporting people by road, especially if those people are sitting in a wheelchair. A national code of practice was published in 1987, but designs changed significantly in the years that followed, with wheelchairs becoming bigger, heavier and more complex. More people were using wheelchairs and new legislation was introduced (the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Equalities Act 2010), which meant a new code of practice for securing wheelchairs in vehicles was long overdue.

Solution

Code of Practice for Wheelchair Passport Schemes, PAS 900, which was published in 2010, provides information on how to secure a wheelchair and keep its occupant safe when used as a seat in a motor vehicle used for providing transport services. Essex County Council and Lincolnshire County Council funded its creation, with technical expertise coming from Unwin Safety Systems. People with disabilities

and numerous organizations were consulted during the creation of the PAS, which was managed by BSI.

Bob Appleyard, Technical Safety Adviser at Unwin Safety Systems, chair of BSI technical committee CH173/1 and a specialist in wheelchair safety and occupant restraint systems, was heavily involved in the development of PAS 900. "We put on an event at the Volvo Truck Centre in Warwickshire and invited along a wide range of stakeholders and asked them what they wanted us to do.

"A passport scheme was actually requested by wheelchair users and their carers as something that would make life easier and safer. It provides an effective means of relaying important information to transport providers, drivers and passenger assistants about how to secure a wheelchair to the floor and accommodate its user to maximize their safety and comfort. The passport is attached to the wheelchair and it contains instructions presented in an easy-to-understand, dependable and hard-wearing format."

PAS 900 is meant for use in transport operations where a risk assessment of the individual passenger's transport needs has taken place as part of an overall risk management process. The scheme is not intended for use on local public transport buses.

Outcome

Transport providers that have so far used the scheme include Lincolnshire, Staffordshire, Essex and Oxfordshire county councils. It is also being used on Transport for London's Dial-a-Ride service, which provides door-to-door transport for people with disabilities in the capital. Appleyard adds: "Use of the scheme is growing rapidly, but I'd like to see the standard used throughout the UK. The scheme is now available 'off-the-shelf', so it's very easy to implement and users are even reporting efficiency savings, which is fantastic. There was an overwhelming need for a more up-to-date system and PAS 900 provides a fantastic solution."

To find out more about PAS 900 please visit bsigroup.com/pas900

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