

# INTERIOR DESIGNERS PROTECT THE PUBLIC

## INTERIOR DESIGNERS ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH LEGAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS

The importance of Building Codes & Standards to the profession of interior design cannot be understated. **Certified Interior Designers undergo formal education, more than 3,000 hours of supervised training, and a three-part, 11-hour internationally-recognized certification examination** to successfully interpret and consistently use national model and state-adopted codes and standards as well as federal and state laws, like the Americans with Disabilities Act to construct safe, sustainable, affordable, accessible, and resilient structures including spaces where large groups of people congregate, such as convention centers, hotels, airport terminals, and more. Their knowledge and skills help to ensure the safety of the public every day. As one of the guardians of the public's health, safety, and welfare in the built environment, it is the responsibility of the profession to be involved with codes and standards work.



### THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Interior designers play an integral role in ensuring that all spaces visited by the public comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Such strict adherence to federal and state accessibility laws not only aids those with special needs, but also protects both private and government clients legally and financially.

#### *Requirements include:*

- Elevator controls, door hardware, and counter heights
- Height and depth for objects obstructing a path of travel or aisle
- Doorway clearances
- Ability and strength required to operate doors
- Existence of ramps and handrails for accessibility
- Required clearances at doors
- Clearances and mounting heights for restroom fixtures



### FIRE AND EMERGENCY SAFETY CODES

Interior designers are responsible for ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the spaces they design. A strong understanding of applicable building codes for fire and emergencies is a necessary skill designers must possess.

#### *Standard safety code examples include:*

- Ensuring clear aisles and horizontal exiting
- Location and size of fire-rated partitions and doors
- Mounting heights and locations of fire extinguisher cabinets, ensuring clear access
- Location of exit signs that identify the path of egress
- Emergency lighting levels
- Audio and visual alarm system throughout the premises
- Specification of materials that comply with fire and health codes (fabrics, wallcoverings, draperies, paint, woods, laminates, glazing, and flooring)



## DISASTER MITIGATION/RESILIENCE

Interior designers plan for natural and man-made disasters in their work by employing strict adherence to current codes and standards and other disaster mitigation construction best practices.

*Examples include:*

- Conduct above ceiling inspections for suspended ceilings
- Advise clients on the placement of furniture and other equipment to avoid exit access blockage, especially if not counterbalanced, anchored, and/or locked.
- Encourage clients to manage shelves, overhead units, and personal items effectively with safety and seismic considerations in mind.
- Conduct historic preservation evaluations on historic and culturally significant structures post-disaster.
- Areas of refuge



## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Interior designers work to ensure safety in medical facilities and strive to find innovative ways to improve healthcare outcomes.

*Examples include:*

- Specify products and materials that mitigate slips, falls, and accidents in medical and assisted living facilities.
- Specify lighting systems that increase a physician's ability to diagnose various conditions by improving her ability to see clearly. For example, the identification of ailments like skin cancer, jaundice, vitiligo, and many other health problems require precise examination lighting.
- Develop wayfinding schemes that help patients navigate their surroundings while visiting medical facilities. This is especially important for elderly patients and patients with dementia.
- Specify colors, patterns, and elements of biophilia that enhance psychological wellness.