

new rules

Most utility websites must be compliant with the **Americans with Disabilities Act** in the future, but the rules for how websites should be accessible are evolving.

The ADA protects against disability-based discrimination. It applies to all federal agencies and organizations doing business with them. Programs receiving federal funds (government agencies, federally-funded projects and schools) may not discriminate against people with disabilities.

impact on utilities

- Municipal-owned utilities that receive any type of federal grant or federal dollars must comply.
- Utilities receiving power from a federal organization (such as the Bonneville Power Administration) may need to comply. This is a gray area.

reduce risk

Many utilities are making good-faith efforts to make websites and other digital media compliant with ADA Section 508 Standards and provide training for key staff.

Our website designers are experts in accessible design. Learn more at

[www.RuraliteServices.org/
Tools/Websites](http://www.RuraliteServices.org/Tools/Websites)

access ABILITY



Powering *Efficient*

Communications

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Do not leave
people with
disabilities
in the dark.

Ruralite
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tools to support access

simple, clear navigation

Place a few buttons with the most common tasks in a prominent place, with words under each button clearly explaining the action.

For example: Manage Account, Make a Payment, Report an Outage, Before You Dig, Latest News.

rich-text documents (vs. PDFs)

PDFs present a problem for vision-impaired readers. Since most PDFs are one big image, screen-reading software cannot read them. Consumers using text-enlargement programs are also out of luck. Publish documents in HTML or another rich-text format in addition to a PDF.

unique link language

Instead of saying "Click here" for a link, explain where the link goes. Screen-reading software can be used to scan for links. Make sure your hyperlink text is clear, unique and descriptive.

Example: Instead of, "[Click here to learn more about us](#)," use, "[To learn more about us, read our History page.](#)"

avoid text overlays

To make sure anyone can easily understand content, remove graphics with text overlays. Instead, place blocks of text below images.

slideshow advance option

Do you use a slideshow with marketing messages? Instead of automatically scrolling messages, design slideshows to advance only when an arrow is clicked.

image tags

When you upload an image to your website, add a caption and alternate text. The text should explain what the image conveys. Include any text from the picture. This is critical for infographics.

Note: This is an ongoing process. Train everyone who maintains the website on image tagging.

headline order

Most content editors let you pick a type style. Be careful with headlines. Only use Headline 1 for page titles. Although Headline 3 might look better visually than Headline 2, never skip a level in body copy. Screen readers assume content is missing.

Ruralite Services follows Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) standards set by the World Wide Web Consortium.

keep in mind:

Nearly one in five Americans has a disability. Make sure everyone can use your website.

- Screen-reading software helps people with visual disabilities understand text and pictures.
- Website visitors with motor disabilities can use special keyboards or software to control a computer with nothing more than eye movement.
- People with hearing disabilities can read the screen, but are unable to hear audio on a webpage or within a video.

The internet can be used to change the way people with disabilities receive information. But websites must be able to work with specialized software.

Our website designers are experts in accessible design. Learn more at www.RuraliteServices.org/Tools/Websites