FTR Now

AODA Emergency Preparedness Guides and Compliance Reporting Tool Now Available

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As we reported in our November 17, 2011 *FTR Now* "Are You Prepared for the *AODA*?," private and not-for-profit sector organizations in Ontario with at least one employee were subject to a January 1, 2012 deadline to comply with the Customer Service Standards as well as the two emergency preparedness requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards. Both Standards are regulations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* ("*AODA*").

To assist organizations in achieving compliance with the *AODA*, the Ministry of Community and Social Services ("MCSS") recently released an online compliance reporting tool as well as emergency preparedness resources. These new resources join an existing set of free resources on the MCSS's website. This *FTR Now* discusses these new online resources.

CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD ACCESSIBILITY COMPLIANCE RESOURCES AND REPORTING TOOL

To help achieve compliance with the Customer Service Standard, organizations have access to free compliance resources, found here. There are separate toolkits for small and large organizations, both of which include sample plans, documents and training resources.

Organizations with 20 or more employees must report on their Customer Service Standards compliance efforts by December 31, 2012 by using the MCSS's newly-released Accessibility Compliance Report (ACR) reporting tool. Organizations with less than 20 employees are exempt from this requirement. To get started, set up a "ONe-Source account" and then answer a series of up to 15 yes/no questions, certify and submit the report. The ACR reporting tool and list of questions are found here.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS UNDER THE INTEGRATED ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS REGULATION

The MCSS recently released two guides to help organizations meet the two emergency preparedness requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards regulation.

First, organizations that prepare emergency procedures, plans or public safety information that are available to the public must provide such information in an accessible format upon request. The guide entitled "Providing emergency and public safety information for people with disabilities" sets out helpful information on how to provide certain types of emergency/public safety information in an accessible format. For example, emergency plans or procedures can be provided in a structured electronic file shared via email so customers can read it with their own assistive devices such as screen readers.

The second emergency preparedness requirement relates to the development and provision of individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, if the disability is such that the individualized information is necessary and the employer is aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability. The guide entitled "Providing emergency response information for employees with disabilities" provides useful advice on preparing your individualized emergency response plan, and includes a sample employee memo, information worksheet and an individualized response information template.

If you have any questions about your organization's readiness for the *AODA* or require assistance, please contact your regular Hicks Morley lawyer.

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