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# **Skimping on Ramp Construction: An Unsafe Investment**

*by James R. Ziglinski, C.R.*



When dealing with limited mobility cases, my brother Dan has become a good sounding board. Due to his own limitations and how he has overcome many of them, I can draw upon his experiences when talking to a client that may be facing similar problems for the first time.

I realize how hard the adjustments can be, especially if you feel like you're putting a price tag on your love. By that I mean having been strapped with a deluge of medical expenses, then having to invest in residential modifications around the home. Things like widening doors, removing thresholds, adjusting baths, and so on can take a real bite out of one's wallet, while at the same time pile on the guilt, because it seems that you are putting your love for the person

indeed on a scale.

A prime example of this is in the way that many of the residential wheelchair ramps are constructed throughout the city. The chair ramp is oftentimes a bridge that can free a person from an imprisoning home to the rest of the world. It is surprising how many times this is where skimping takes place. Not only do many of the ramps I've seen recently fail code requirements, but they are also completely unsafe. This can be backed up by the number of injuries sustained by chair bound individuals or their helpers slipping and falling from these unsafe structures. I realize that many times the cost of helping someone gain back their mobility can be quite shocking. However, corners should not be cut at the risk of further injury to an individual.

Let me put it another way. The cost of constructing an unsafe "Mr. Jiffy Fixit" type of ramp may very easily end up being much more expensive in the long run than the amount needed to invest in a proper, safe structure; a structure which will need to be build only once.

I've seen ramps that were way too steep to walk up, much less try to push someone up (or pull oneself up, for that matter). As many of you know, it's not the moving up that's hard, it's trying to hold someone back while easing them down.

You may have been thrust into your own situation by an accident or by nature taking its toll on an elderly loved one. The people who designed and wrote the code requirements for ramps have been doing so for a very long time, working from thorough studies. Their safety judgments are not clouded by rage, guilt, or love. They have nothing to gain by requesting that ramps be constructed in a certain manner. Unless, of course, you count the safety of the individuals who will be using those ramps on a daily basis.

If you or someone you know is facing a similar situation, there are ways to go through it without "banging" a ramp together with loading pallets. You can start by asking questions. Contact a contractor who handles ADA work and residential modifications. You will find that these individuals are usually quite helpful. Sometimes they can offer special financing for your projects, or they may have a list of possible sources for grants or low cost loans. By contacting the ADA contractor, you may be able to determine which ones are out to take advantage of you versus who is truly there to help.

When making your final selection of a contractor, use the same sources of information you normally would use; NARI (National Association of the Remodeling Industry), the BBB (Better Business Bureau), and so on. Then ask how they got involved in ADA. The most compassionate and understanding contractors are those that got involved due to personal experience. Those are your key to proper information, true understanding, and high quality work for the investments that must be made.

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We hope this information has been helpful to you! If you have any further questions, please visit our website at [www.aroundyourhouse.net](http://www.aroundyourhouse.net), or contact Jim at Around Your House.

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