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**Assistive products for blind and vision-  
impaired persons — Tactile walking  
surface indicators**

*Produits d'assistance pour personnes aveugles ou visuellement  
affaiblies — Indicateurs tactiles de surfaces de marche*



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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 23599 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 173, *Assistive products for persons with disability*.

## Introduction

The purpose of this International Standard is to create requirements for tactile walking surface indicators (TWSIs) for blind or vision-impaired persons.

When blind or vision-impaired persons travel alone they might encounter problems and hazards in various situations. In order to obtain information for wayfinding, these pedestrians use information available from the natural and built environment, including tactual, acoustic and visual information. However, environmental information is not always reliable; it is for this reason that TWSIs perceived through use of a long white cane, through the soles of the shoes and through use of residual vision have been developed.

TWSIs were invented in Japan in 1965. They are now used around the world to help blind or vision-impaired persons to travel independently. At present, TWSI patterns and installation methods vary from country to country. This International Standard aims to provide a basis for a common approach for TWSIs at the international level, while acknowledging that some differences may be necessary at the local level to accommodate climatic, geographical, cultural or other issues that might exist.

TWSIs should be designed and installed based on a simple, logical and consistent layout. This will enable tactile indicators to facilitate not only the independent travel of blind or vision-impaired persons in places they frequently travel, but also to support their independent travel in places they visit for the first time.

Currently, there are several forms of TWSIs, but the ability to detect differences in tactile patterns through the soles of the shoes or the long white cane varies depending on individual differences. Therefore, the consolidated findings of science, technology and experience were employed to define the characteristics of TWSIs that can be detected and recognized by potential users. Additionally, in order to ensure that TWSIs achieve maximum effect in conveying information, it is important that they be installed in or on a smooth surface where blind or vision-impaired persons can identify them without interference from an irregular walking surface.

It is also necessary to ensure that TWSIs can be effectively used by vision-impaired persons as well as people who are blind. For this purpose, TWSIs should be easily detectable through use of residual vision. This is achieved through visual contrast between TWSIs and the surrounding or adjacent surface. Visual contrast is influenced primarily by luminance contrast, and secondarily by difference in colour or tone. In order to have good visibility, it is necessary to have sufficient illumination without glare and it is important to maintain the visual contrast between TWSIs and the surrounding or adjacent surface.

While TWSIs should be effective for blind or vision-impaired persons, attention should also be paid to their surface structure and materials in order to ensure that all pedestrians, including those with impaired mobility, can safely and effectively negotiate them.

TWSIs are installed in public facilities, buildings used by many people, railway stations and on sidewalks and other walking surfaces. Attention patterns may be installed in the vicinity of pedestrian crossings, at-grade kerbs, railway platforms, stairs, ramps, escalators, travelators, elevators, etc. Guiding patterns may be used alone or in combination with attention patterns in order to indicate the walking route from one place to another.



# Assistive products for blind and vision-impaired persons — Tactile walking surface indicators

## 1 Scope

This International Standard provides product specifications for tactile walking surface indicators (TWSIs) and recommendations for their installation in order to assist in the safe and independent mobility of blind or vision-impaired persons.

This International Standard specifies two types of TWSIs: attention patterns and guiding patterns. Both types can be used indoors and outdoors throughout the built environment where there are insufficient cues for wayfinding, or at specific hazards.

Some countries have adopted other designs of TWSIs based on the consolidated findings of science, technology and experience, ensuring that they can be detected and distinguished by most users. National standards, regulations and guidelines governed by national legislation specify where TWSIs are to be used. This International Standard is not intended to replace requirements and recommendations contained in such national standards, regulations or guidelines.

## 2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

### 2.1

#### **attention pattern**

TWSI design, calling attention to a hazard only, or to hazards and decision points

NOTE Attention patterns can be installed in the vicinity of pedestrian crossings, at-grade kerbs, railway platforms, stairs, ramps, escalators, travelators, elevators, etc.

### 2.2

#### **at-grade kerb**

flush kerb

kerb whereby the edge of the walkway is at the same level as adjoining vehicular ways

NOTE See Figures B.10 and B.11.

### 2.3

#### **CIE Y value**

tristimulus value Y of the CIE 1931 standard colorimetric system for reflecting objects

NOTE 1 The CIE Y value equals the percentage value of the luminous reflectance.

NOTE 2  $Y = 0$  denotes the reflectance of an absolutely black object (no light is reflected).  $Y = 100$  denotes the reflectance of a perfectly white object (no light is absorbed or transmitted).

### 2.4

#### **decision point**

intersection or change of direction along a path of travel defined by TWSIs

### 2.5

#### **discrete units**

individual domes, cones or elongated bars that are embedded into the ground or floor surfaces