

**Access Systems for  
Off-Road Machines**

SAE Recommended Practice  
Revised August 1985

S. A. E.  
LIBRARY

SAENORM.COM : Click to view the PDF of J185 - 198508

Submitted for recognition as an American National Standard

**ACCESS SYSTEMS FOR OFF-ROAD MACHINES**

1. **PURPOSE:** This Recommended Practice establishes guidelines for access systems primarily to aid in minimizing accidents and injury to personnel getting on, off, or moving about while servicing or preparing to operate off-road machines.
2. **SCOPE:**
  - 2.1 Minimum criteria are provided for steps, stairways, ladders, walkways, platforms, handrails, handholds, guardrails, and entrance openings which permit ingress to and egress from operator, inspection, or service platforms on off-road work machines parked in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
  - 2.2 This Recommended Practice pertains to off-road self-propelled work machines used in construction, general purpose industry, forestry and specialized mining machinery categories as defined in SAE J1116 (JUN81). It also pertains to specialized off-road machines used in mining such as shovels, draglines, and drills not identified in SAE J1116.
  - 2.3 The minimum criteria established herein is based on one unladen person using the access system at any one time.
3. **DEFINITIONS:**
  - 3.1 **Access System:** System provided on a machine for ingress into and egress from an operator, inspection or service platform from and to the ground.
    - 3.1.1 **Primary Access System:** Access system normally used.
    - 3.1.2 **Alternate Access System:** Access system for use during anticipatable emergency situations when the primary access system is not usable.

SAE Technical Board Rules provide that: "This report is published by SAE to advance the state of technical and engineering sciences. The use of this report is entirely voluntary, and its applicability and suitability for any particular use, including any patent infringement arising therefrom, is the sole responsibility of the user."

SAE reviews each technical report at least every five years at which time it may be reaffirmed, revised, or cancelled. SAE invites your written comments and suggestions.

- 3.2 Boom Walkway: An inclined walkway used mainly on long booms such as on  
∅ draqlines for inclined angles up to 40 degrees to the horizontal.
- 3.3 Controlled Descent Device: Device which can automatically lower a person  
without power at a fixed rate of speed as part of an alternate egress system.
- 3.4 Enclosure Opening: Opening in an enclosure for an access system.
- 3.4.1 Primary Opening: Opening normally used for access.
- 3.4.2 Alternate Opening: Opening for use during emergencies when the primary  
opening is not usable.
- 3.4.3 Service Opening: Opening for use during service or inspection.  
∅
- 3.5 Foot Barrier: A barrier to prevent a person's foot from slipping off the  
edge of a platform or walkway.
- 3.6 Guardrail: A device around the open sides of walkways or platforms to  
protect a person from falling.
- 3.7 Handrail and Handhold: Devices that may be grasped by the hand for body  
support.
- 3.7.1 Handrail: A device which permits hand movement to a different location  
without removing the hand from the device.
- 3.7.2 Handhold: A device for single hand placement.
- 3.8 Ladder: An access system whose inclined angle from the horizontal is  
greater than 50 degrees but not more than 90° consisting of a series of  
equally spaced steps that accommodate one or both feet.
- 3.8.1 Vertical Ladder: A ladder whose inclined angle from the horizontal is  
greater than 75°.
- 3.8.2 Inclined Ladder: A ladder whose inclined angle from the horizontal is  
greater than 50° but not more than 75°.
- 3.9 Ladder Fall Limiting Device: Any device which minimizes or limits the  
length of fall from a ladder system.
- 3.10 Operator's Platform: Area from which an operator controls the machine's  
travel and work functions.
- 3.11 Passageway: Walkway with confining barriers on both sides that extend more  
∅ than 1200 mm vertically above the walking surface for erect walking or  
300 mm for crawling.
- 3.12 Platform: A surface from which machine operation, servicing, inspection,  
or maintenance is performed.

- 3.13 Ramp: An inclined plane of 20° or less from horizontal without steps but may have cleats or other surface treatments for the purpose of traction.
- 3.14 Rest Platform: Platform used in conjunction with a ladder system for person to rest while standing without requiring use of hands.
- 3.15 Riser Height: Height between two consecutive steps or rungs measured from the tread surface of one to tread surface of the next step or rung.
- 3.16 Rung: Device for foot placement to be used only on vertical ladders.
- 3.17 Stairway: A device whose inclined angle from the horizontal is greater than 20° but not more than 50° consisting of four or more steps.
- 3.18 Step: Device for foot placement on a ladder, stairwell, or as individual placements.
- 3.19 Stride Distance: Horizontal distance from the leading edge of one step to the leading edge of the next step.
- 3.20 Three Points of Support: Features of an access system which permits a person to use two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand while ascending, descending, or moving about on the machine.
- 3.21 Tread Depth: Distance from the leading edge to back of step.
- 3.22 Walkway: A structure that permits walking or crawling between locations on a machine.
4. GENERAL CRITERIA:
- 4.1 Access systems' stopping and standing surfaces shall comply without visible permanent deformation from a force perpendicular to the surface with the following minimum criteria:
- (a) 4500 N uniformly distributed force per square meter of surface area or fraction thereof if less than one square meter.
  - (b) 2000 N concentrated force applied at any location through a 125 mm diameter disc.
- 4.2 Openings in walkways and platform surfaces shall not permit the passage of a 40 mm or larger diameter spherical object through it. If the floor surface is above a surface where persons will be walking, standing, or working, the opening size shall not permit the passage of a 20 mm or larger diameter spherical object through it. Solid surfaces shall be used when necessary to prevent material from going through the surface that could result in personal injury to a person above or below the surface. For boom walkways and other similar areas that are used only for inspection or maintenance, the standing or stepping surface openings can be increased up to twice the above recommended values.

- 4.3 Handrails, handholds, and guardrails shall be capable of withstanding a minimum force of 1000 N applied at any point from any direction without visible permanent deformation. Flexible devices shall not deflect more than 80 mm from their normal undeflected position with the test load applied.
- 4.4 Roofs of machinery enclosures such as cabs and canopies which are used only for inspection platforms may comply only with 4.1 (b).
- 4.5 Access systems shall:
- (a) Minimize probability of a user being inadvertently restrained by devices such as protrusions, controls, steps, or handles catching or holding body appendages or user's wearing apparel.
  - (b) Minimize protrusions that could trip or increase severity of injury in case of a fall.
  - (c) Provide smooth hand grasp surfaces.
  - (d) Minimize probability of user contact with potential hazards such as extreme differentials in heat or cold, moving parts, electrical hazards, and sharp corners.
  - (e) Accommodate dimensionally a 95th percentile male through a 5th percentile female as defined in SAE J833a JAN80.
  - (f) Be obvious as to proper usage without special training.
  - (g) Permit and, by proper placement of components, promote achievement of three points of support while ascending or descending the access system when more than one meter above the ground.
  - (h) Permit rescue if a person becomes incapacitated while using the access system.
- 4.6 An alternate access system shall be provided if the operator's platform is three meters or higher from ground level; preferably if two meters or higher from the ground.
- 4.7 Step, walkway, and platform surfaces (including any machine or tool structural component used as part of an access system) shall be slip resistant.
- 4.8 Primary access system devices may be portable for convenient storage on the machine but shall be capable of being positively secured when in use and stored position.
- 4.9 Machines which have an access system where a person at the system's entrance is not clearly visible to the machine's operator shall have instructions posted at the entrance to the access system describing the method to secure permission to board.

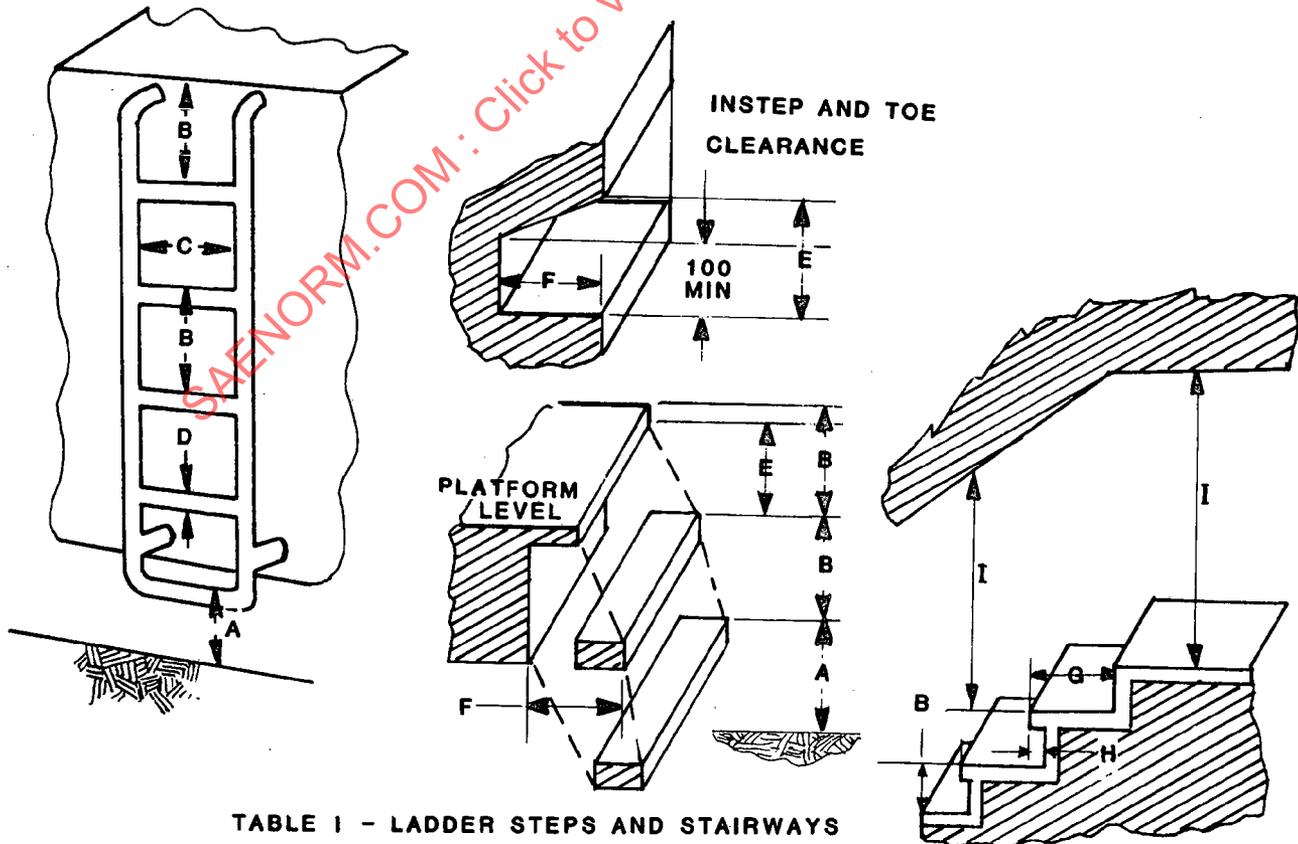
4.10 Alternate access system entrance and travel route shall be clearly  $\emptyset$  indicated if not obvious to the user.

5. STEPS:

- 5.1 Steps shall conform with the recommended dimensions in Table 1. It is preferred that all steps be wide enough to accommodate both feet.
- 5.2 Where lateral body movement is necessary from the top or bottom step of a ladder to the next stepping surface, the vertical distance from the step to that surface shall be no more than 300 mm.
- 5.3 Steps shall be coordinated with properly positioned handrails and handholds to encourage the use of the proper foot.
- 5.4 Wherever a foot may contact a moving part by protruding through the step, a shield shall be provided between the step and the moving part.
- 5.5 Step design shall minimize foot slipping laterally off the step.
- 5.6 Step tread surface shall not be intended to be used as a handhold.
- 5.7 Step design shall minimize accumulation of debris and aid in the cleaning of mud and debris from the shoe sole.
- 5.8 Step design shall provide natural foot placement while descending or the step shall be clearly visible while descending.
- 5.9 Flexibly mounted series of steps should be avoided. If used, the steps shall not move more than 80 mm elastically in any plane when a horizontal force of 1000 N is applied centered on to the outer edge of the leading edge of the first nonswinging step from the ground. The first step from the ground may be free swinging.

Dimension	Minimum mm	Maximum mm	Preferred mm
A. Height of first step above ground or platform	--	700	400
B. Riser height			
(1) Steps, or ladders, see 6.5	230*	400	300
(2) Stairways	--	250	180
C. Step width			
(1) One foot	160	--	200
(2) Both feet	320	--	400
D. Rung tread - dia. or width	19	--	60
E. Instep clearance	150	--	190
F. Toe clearance	150	--	200
G. Tread depth			
(1) Steps and ladders	130	--	200
(2) Stairways and boom walks	240	400	300
H. Tread projection from riser	--	25	--
I. Head clearance above step leading to walkway	2000	--	--

\* 150 mm from top step of ladder to platform.



## 6. LADDERS:

- 6.1 Ladder steps shall meet the criteria specified in Section 5.
- 6.2 Ladders which extend more than six meters vertically above ground level shall be equipped with a ladder fall limiting device. Such a device shall not require continual manipulation for the user to ascend or descend the ladder.
- 6.2.1 Passive ladder fall limiting devices are preferred.
- 6.2.2 Lower end of a ladder cage or other similar device, if used, shall be a minimum of 2.1 meters and a maximum of 2.5 meters above ground or platform level.
- 6.2.3 Ladder cage's internal surface on a vertical ladder shall not extend more than 760 mm from the steps nor shall its internal width be more than 760 mm.
- 6.2.4 Inclined ladder cage shall be sized as required to provide equivalent performance as required in paragraph 6.2.3 for vertical ladders.
- 6.3 A rest platform shall be provided for at least every 15 meters of vertical climb; preferably every 10 meters of vertical climb.
- 6.4 Winding or spiral ladders shall not exceed three meters in vertical height without open-side guardrails; preferably not exceed two meters in vertical height.
- 6.5 Inclined ladder and boom walk steps shall be spaced such that two times the riser height plus the stride distance shall not exceed 800 mm; preferably not exceed 600 mm.

## 7. STAIRWAYS:

- 7.1 Stairway steps shall meet the criteria specified in Section 5.
- 7.2 Step tread depth on stairways shall be equal to or greater than the riser height. Successive riser heights and step tread depths are to be uniform.
- 7.3 Stairways shall be provided with at least one handrail.
- 7.4 Guardrails shall be provided on the open side or sides of stairways if a vertical drop from the stairway exceeds three meters; preferably if the vertical drop exceeds two meters.

## 8. HANDRAILS AND HANDHOLDS:

- 8.1 Handrails and handholds shall conform with the recommended dimensions in Table 2.

- 8.2 Handrails shall be appropriately spaced to provide continuous support to a moving person and within convenient reach.
- 8.3 The preferred cross section of a handrail and handhold is circular. A square or rectangular cross section with rounded corners is permissible.
- 8.4 Handrails and successive handholds shall be placed parallel to the path of motion of the user. Handholds may be oriented vertically or horizontally but shall be consistent within a given system.
- 8.5 Any handrail or handhold on which the hand surface extends beyond the support shall have a change of shape at the end of the hand surface to help prevent the hand from slipping off the end.
- 8.6 The use of handrails on a ladder system is preferred to handholds. Where handholds are used, the spacing shall correspond to the step spacing.

Dimension	Minimum mm	Maximum mm	Preferred mm
A. Width - dia. or across flats (1) Ladder, step, walkway (2) Stairway and ramp handrails	16 16	38 80	25 50
B. Length between bend radii for support legs of handholds	150	--	250
C. Hand clearance to mounting surface	75	--	--
D. Distance above standing surface	900	1600	--
E. Vertical continuation distance of handrail above step, platform, stairway or ramp	850	960	900
F. Offset distance of handrail or handhold from edge of step	--	200	--
G. Width between parallel handrails (1) Ladder (2) Stairway and ramp	-- 460	600 --	400* --
H. Distance above walkway, passageway, step, or stairway stairway step	850	1400	900

\* 600 mm if hip clearance is required.

Table 2  
(Continued on Page 9)

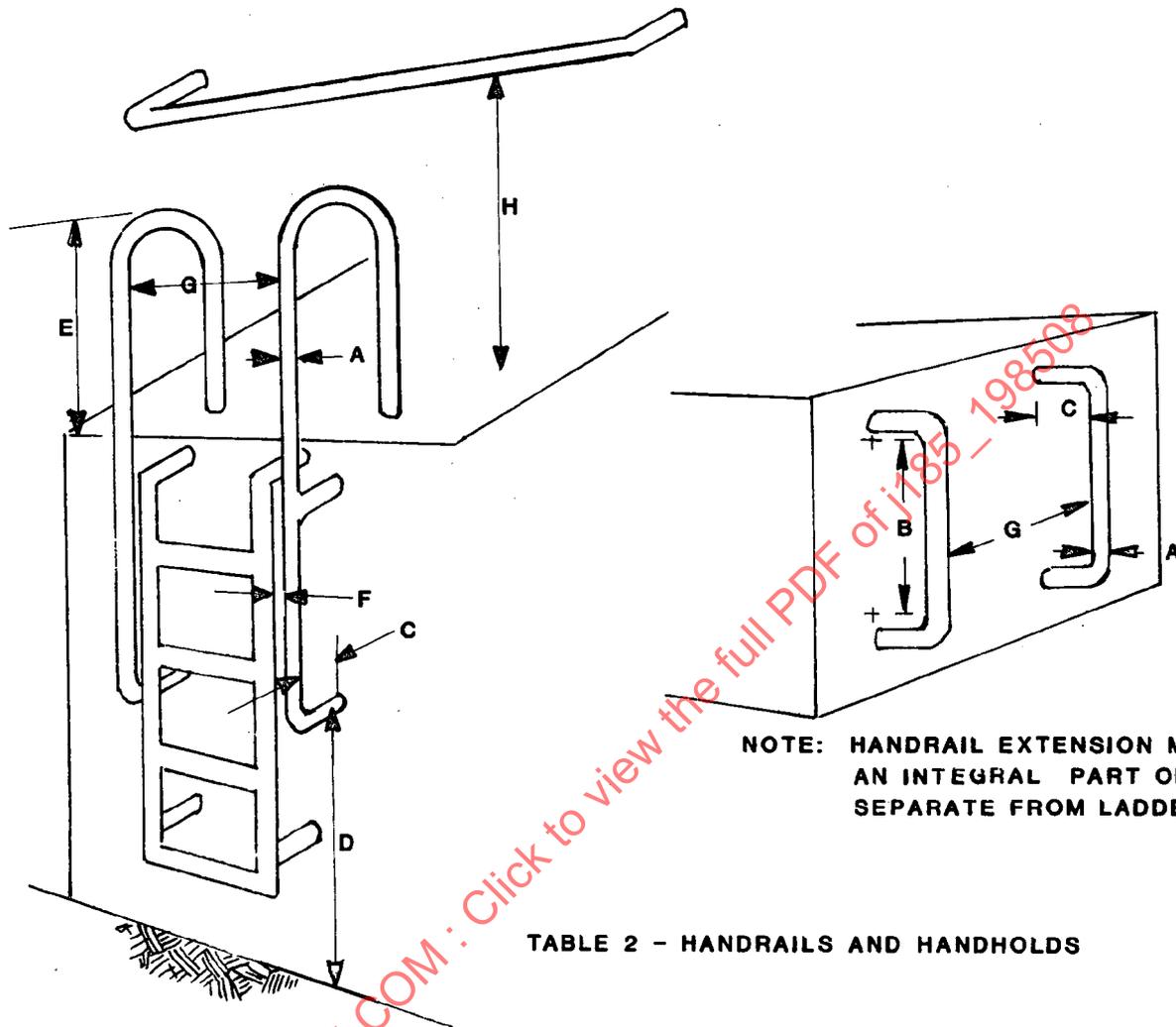


TABLE 2 - HANDRAILS AND HANDHOLDS

## 9. PLATFORM, PASSAGEWAYS, WALKWAYS, AND GUARDRAILS:

- 9.1 Platforms, passageways, walkways, guardrails, and foot barriers shall conform with the recommended dimensions in Table 3. A rail shall be spaced midway between the top rail of a guardrail and the walkway or platform.
- 9.2 Platforms and walkways shall be provided with handholds, handrails, or guardrails. Guardrails shall be provided if the vertical drop from the open side of a platform or walkway's surface exceeds three meters; preferably if the vertical drop exceeds two meters.
- 9.3 Walkways used only for access to service and inspection platforms not more than three meters above ground level may have a minimum width of 230 mm. Service and inspection may be performed from the walkway if it can be readily performed while maintaining three points of support.

- 9.4 Where an opening has been provided in a guardrail, other than to provide access to a ladder or to steps, device shall be provided across the opening that meet the requirements specified in 4.3.
- 9.5 A foot barrier shall be provided whenever a person's foot may slip from a walkway or platform into moving machinery or equipment that could create a hazard. The barrier also may be utilized to prevent material from sliding off the platform or walkway.

Dimension	Minimum mm	Maximum mm	Preferred mm
A. Width			
(1) Platform	300	--	600
(2) Walkway	300	--	600
B. Head Clearance			
(1) Standing	2000	--	--
(2) Kneeling*	1500	--	--
(3) Crawling*	1000	--	--
C. Guardrail height	1000	1100	1100
D. Foot barrier height	50	--	100
E. Foot barrier to floor clearance	0	10	--
F. Passageway**			
(1) Forward facing	550	--	650
(2) Sideways	330	--	450
(3) Passing others	900	--	1300

\* For inspection and maintenance only.

\*\* Use preferred dimension as minimum for crawling.

Table 3  
(Continued on Page 11)

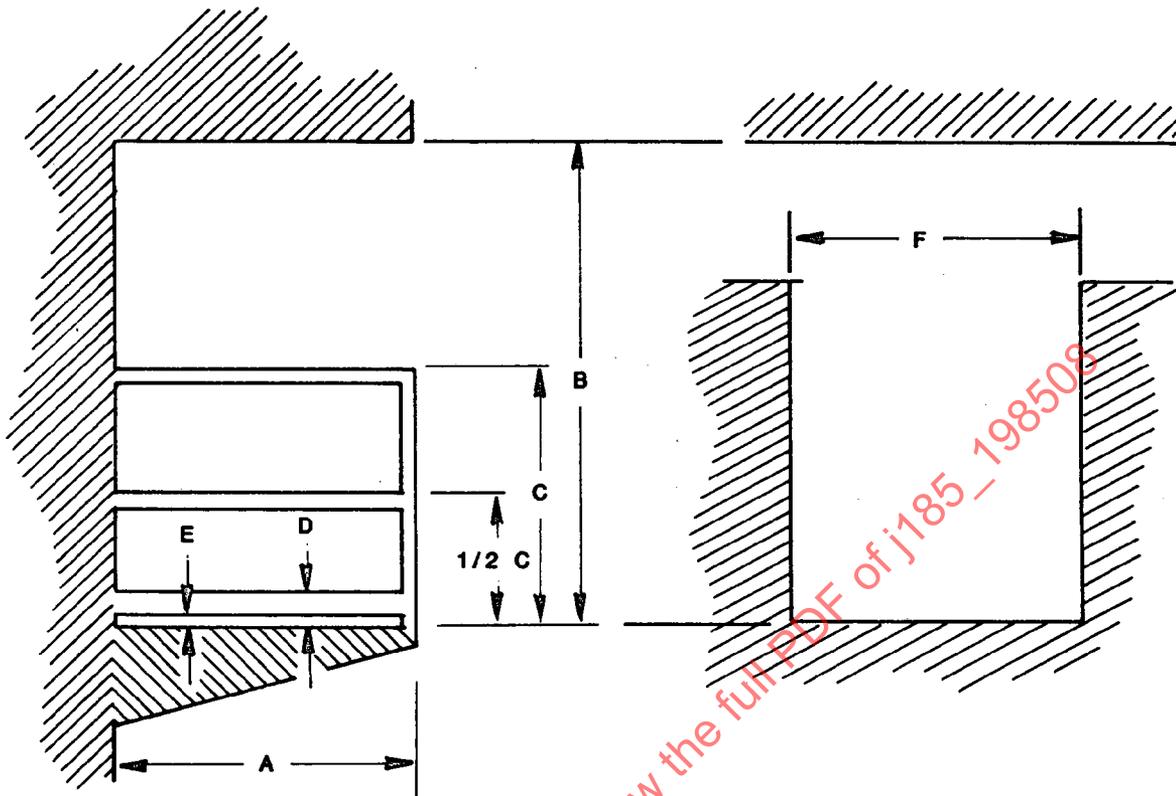


TABLE 3 - PLATFORMS, PASSAGEWAY, WALKWAYS AND GUARDRAILS

10. ENCLOSURE OPENINGS:

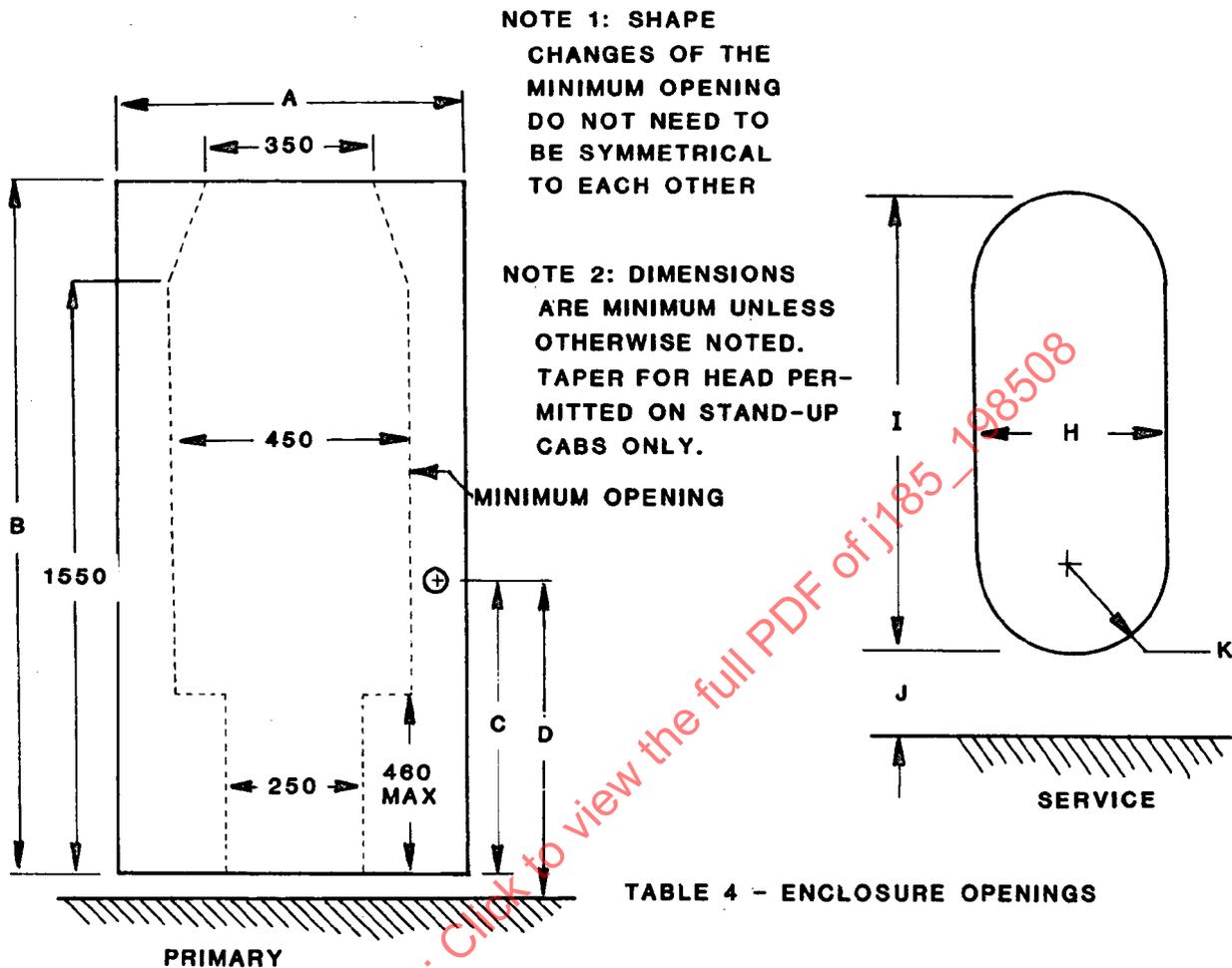
- 10.1 Enclosure openings shall conform with the recommended dimensions in Table 4.
- 10.2 If a rectangular enclosure opening is not possible, the minimum opening may be reduced to the minimum dimension indicated in Table 4. As an alternate, the minimum opening's 460 max. dimension can be increased to 770 mm in conjunction with an increase in the 250 mm dimension to 300 mm.
- 10.3 The primary opening shall be accessible directly from the access steps or from a platform or walkway.
- 10.4 The enclosure opening shall not sweep the area where the person must stand to open or close the door.
- 10.5 An alternate opening shall be provided in an enclosure surface different from the surface of the primary opening.
- 10.6 Force needed to open and close a hinged enclosure door or cover should not exceed 135 N.

- 10.7 An enclosure opening door that will be left open during machine operation shall be provided with a means to secure it in the open position.
- 10.8 Hinged egress doors shall normally open outward. Sliding doors shall be designed to open when moved in the direction opposite to the machine's primary direction of travel.
- 10.9 A minimum of 80 mm hand clearance shall be provided:
- between the outer vertical edge of a hinged door and any fixed object other than its door frame, and,
  - where required on other type of enclosure opening covers.
- 10.10 Removable enclosure opening covers held in place by gravity, such as manhole covers, shall be designed to prevent the possibility of falling through the opening.
- 10.11 A removable enclosure opening cover shall not exceed 40 Kg in weight if required to be lifted vertically up to 300 mm; with a weight decrease of at least 5 Kg for each additional 300 mm increment in lift height.

Dimension	Minimum mm	Maximum mm	Preferred mm
<b>Primary Opening</b>			
A. Width - see 10.2	450	--	680
B. Height			
(1) Sit-down cab	1300	--	--
(2) Stand-up cab	1800	--	--
C. Height of internal door handle from floor			
(1) Sit-down cab	500	850	--
(2) Stand-up cab	800	1000	--
D. Height of external door handle above standing surface	500	1500*	900
<b>Alternate Opening (preferred to be same size as primary opening)</b>			
E. Round (dia.)	650	--	--
F. Square	600 x 600	--	--
G. Rectangular	470 x 650	--	--
<b>Service Openings</b>			
H. Width	450	--	680
I. Height	760	--	1100
J. Bottom edge to floor	--	500	250
K. Corner radius	--	0.5 Width	150

\* 1700 mm if from the ground.

Table 4  
(Continued on Page 13)



#### 11. POWERED OR MANUAL ACTUATED ACCESS DEVICES:

11.1 Requirements specified in Sections 4 through 11 apply to these devices.

11.2 Elevators shall conform to the performance requirements specified in ANSI A17.1-1978.

11.3 Personnel hoist shall conform to the performance requirements specified in ANSI A10.4-1975.

11.4 Access device controls shall:

- (a) Be protected against inadvertent actuation.
- (b) Stop the device and maintain it in that position when the control is released or moved to the neutral or hold position.
- (c) Be located at each access station to raise or lower the device.
- (d) Not require more than 225 N actuation force.
- (e) Permit lowering the device to an access station if power fails.