
ISO 21542:2021 — Building Construction: Accessibility and Usability of the Built Environment

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD (ISO)

Supporting accessible information within ISO 21542 environments

1. What this is

ISO 21542:2021, “Building construction — Accessibility and usability of the built environment”, is an international standard covering the design and construction of accessible, usable buildings, including access, circulation, egress and fire evacuation. Unlike UK-specific standards, it is internationally recognised — useful for organisations operating across multiple countries, or wanting to reference an international benchmark rather than a UK-only one.

2. Who it applies to

Building designers, owners and operators of non-domestic buildings internationally (with some guidance for residential common areas). Particularly relevant to organisations wanting a globally recognised accessibility reference rather than a jurisdiction-specific one — for example airport, transport or retail groups operating in several countries.

3. What kind of instrument this is

An International Standard (ISO) — voluntary unless adopted or referenced by national regulation, planning guidance, or a specific contract. Frequently used as a procurement or design benchmark, and referenced by national standards bodies when developing local equivalents.

4. Specific requirements relevant to announcements and accessible communication

- Clause 5.1 (Orientation and information), including 5.1.2 Levels of information — how information is made available to building users.
- Clause 5.5 (Signage), 5.5.1–5.5.14 — visual, tactile and Braille signage provisions.
- Clause 5.7 (Acoustics), including 5.7.3 Hearing enhancement.
- Clause 5.8 (Emergency warning systems, signals and information), 5.8.1–5.8.5 — covering general provisions, emergency warnings, audible emergency warnings, visual emergency warning signals, and fire emergency warning systems specifically.
- Clause 10.4.2 (Hearing enhancement systems), within the rooms-and-spaces section.
- Clause 11 (Fire safety and evacuation), 11.1–11.4 — ISO confirms this covers accessibility during both normal egress and evacuation in fire conditions.

5. What organisations are expected to do

- Provide clear, multi-format orientation and wayfinding information (Clause 5.1).
- Provide accessible signage (Clause 5.5).
- Consider hearing enhancement in relevant spaces (5.7.3, 10.4.2).
- Ensure emergency warnings are both audible and visual (5.8.3–5.8.4), not audible-only.

6. Which requirements AnnounceAgain can help address

The Clause 5.1 expectation for accessible information provision, for routine PA-style announcements only — not the certified fire alarm system covered separately under 5.8.5 and Clause 11 (see sections 8–9), and not

the dedicated hearing-enhancement/induction-loop systems addressed under 5.7.3 and 10.4.2, which AnnounceAgain does not provide (see section 9).

7. How AnnounceAgain addresses them

- Converts routine PA announcements to text automatically, giving building users a visual equivalent to spoken information.
- Makes translated, replayable text available on personal devices, so information is not lost the moment it is spoken.
- Applies to routine, non-emergency PA/tannoy announcements only. AnnounceAgain has no role — primary or supplementary — in fire alarm, emergency warning, or evacuation communication; that remains entirely the responsibility of certified equipment (see section 9).

8. Requirements AnnounceAgain does not satisfy by itself

- Must not be relied on as a visual emergency warning system under 5.8.4, or as a fire emergency warning system under 5.8.5, in any capacity — primary or supplementary. Those require dedicated, tested, fail-safe certified systems.
- Does not cover tactile/Braille signage (5.5), general wayfinding infrastructure (5.1.2, 6.3.2), or physical fire evacuation infrastructure (Clause 11.4).

9. Requirements needing certified hardware or other measures

- Certified fire alarm and emergency voice communication systems (5.8.5, Clause 11) — see the separate BS 5839-8 / BS EN 50849 datasheets.
- Dedicated hearing enhancement / induction loop installations (5.7.3, 10.4.2).
- Tactile and Braille signage production, and physical evacuation infrastructure (refuge points, evacuation lifts) under 11.4.

10. Suggested wording for an organisation's accessibility statement

“AnnounceAgain provides visual, replayable, translated text versions of routine PA/tannoy announcements, helping make our everyday announcements more accessible. It is separate from, and plays no role in, our fire alarm or emergency evacuation systems, which remain certified equipment operated independently.”

Important: This datasheet summarises the publicly available scope and clause structure of ISO 21542:2021. It is not a substitute for the published standard, does not constitute legal or design advice, and installing AnnounceAgain does not by itself demonstrate compliance with ISO 21542. Organisations should obtain and consult the current published standard from ISO or their national standards body.

Sources & further reading

- [ISO 21542:2021 — iso.org standard overview](https://www.iso.org/standard/75401.html)
- [ISO 21542:2021 — preview / table of contents \(iTeh Standards\)](https://www.iso.org/standard/75401.html)