

A PLAIN-ENGLISH BRIEFING FOR MEMBERS

Can every customer use your *website*?

If your website is hard to use for people with disabilities, you could lose customers — and get a letter from a lawyer. Here's what that means for your farm, and the simple steps to protect yourself.

PRESENTED BY



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MEMBER BRIEFING

Summer 2026

About 1 in 4 of your customers
lives with a disability.

1/4

61 MILLION AMERICANS

That's grandparents with failing eyesight, folks who can't use a mouse, people who rely on screen-reading software. **If they can't browse your trees or check your hours, they'll buy from the farm down the road.**

SOURCE • CDC

Website lawsuits are at an all-time high.

5,000+

FILED IN 2025 ALONE

Some law firms make a business of finding inaccessible websites and suing. They don't skip small businesses. **Settlements usually run \$25,000 to \$100,000+** — before your own legal bills.

We're hearing between **\$5,000 to \$15,000** for small businesses.

SOURCE • SEYFARTH ADA TITLE III
REPORT

Almost every website has these problems — probably yours too.

96%

OF WEBSITES CHECKED

When researchers scanned a million popular websites, 96% failed at least one basic accessibility check. **The good news: most problems are the same handful of easy-to-fix issues.**

SOURCE • WEBAIM MILLION

PART 1 — THE RISK

First: what's actually at **stake** for your farm?

The law that protects people with disabilities applies to your website — not just your parking lot and front gate. Here's how that can reach a small business.

THE SHORT VERSION

The law covers your website — even a small farm.

THE ADA

The Americans with Disabilities Act says businesses open to the public must be usable by people with disabilities. Courts have repeatedly ruled that this includes your website and online store.

THE STANDARD

WCAG is the checklist. The law doesn't spell out the technical rules, but courts and lawyers point to a published set of guidelines called WCAG as the bar a website should meet.

"WE'RE TOO SMALL"

There's no free pass for small businesses. Serial filers often target small operators precisely because they're less likely to have fixed their sites. Size won't save you.

THE REALITY

You don't have to be perfect overnight. Showing you've made a real, ongoing effort goes a long way — both with customers and if a complaint ever lands.

Four ways this hits your bottom line.

1 A demand letter

A lawyer's letter demanding money and fixes. **Ignore it and it becomes a lawsuit.** Many farms don't even know they have a problem until this arrives.

2 A lawsuit

Settlements typically run **\$5,000 to \$15,000+**, plus their attorney fees and yours. For a seasonal business, that can wipe out a whole year's profit.

3 Lost sales

If a customer can't read your prices or finish checkout, **they buy their tree somewhere else** — and it hurts most during your November–December rush.

4 Your reputation

A public complaint sends the message that your farm **isn't welcoming to everyone**. Word travels fast in a tight-knit, family-focused community.

LAW OFFICES OF ■■■■■ & ■■■■■

Re: ADA Accessibility Violation

Our client, a person with a visual disability, was unable to use your website to purchase goods...

Your site fails to meet accessibility standards in **numerous respects...**

To resolve this matter without litigation, we demand **\$45,000** and full remediation within 30 days...

RESPONSE REQUIRED

What actually happens next.

01 The letter arrives

Often at peak season. It looks official and gives you a tight deadline to pay and fix.

02 Ignoring it makes it worse

No response typically means a lawsuit filed in federal court — and higher costs.

03 You may just pay to settle and to fix

Most cases settle. You end up paying the settlement, the lawyers, and the repairs anyway. No matter what, consult a lawyer first.

04 Fixing early avoids all of it

The cheapest path is making your site usable **before** anyone comes looking.

PART 2 — WHO GETS LEFT OUT

Who's being **left out** right now?

Accessibility isn't complicated once you know who you're helping. A usable website works for four kinds of needs — and getting these right helps *every* customer.

Every guideline rests on four principles: POUR.

P Perceivable

Information and interface must be presentable in ways users can perceive — alt text, captions, and sufficient contrast.

O Operable

Interface components and navigation must be operable — keyboard access, no seizure-inducing content, and enough time to read.

U Understandable

Information and interface operation must be understandable — readable text, predictable navigation, and input assistance.

R Robust

Content must be robust enough to be interpreted by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies.

Four basics every usable website needs (POUR Principles)



They can see & hear it

Text is big and dark enough to read. Photos have descriptions. Any video has captions. **Nothing important is invisible.**



They can use it

Every button and link works with just a keyboard. Tap targets are big enough for shaky hands. **No mouse required.**



They can understand it

Labels are clear, language is plain, and things behave the way people expect. **No guessing games.**



It works with their tools

Screen readers and other assistive tools can make sense of your pages. **Built properly under the hood.**

PART 3 — THE COMMON PROBLEMS

The handful of problems we see *again and again*.

The same six issues show up on almost every website. Fix these and you clear away the bulk of your risk — most are quick and inexpensive.

The six most common problems.

01

Text that's too light

Pale gray words on a white background that many people simply can't read.

83% of sites

02

Photos with no description

Screen readers skip right past your beautiful trees — the customer hears nothing.

55% of sites

03

Forms with no labels

Order forms and checkout fields with no labels a screen reader can announce.

46% of sites

04

Can't use a keyboard

Buttons and menus that only work with a mouse leave many customers stuck.

Very common

05

"Click here" links

Vague links that make no sense when read out on their own.

Very common

06

Scanned-in PDFs

Price lists and forms saved as pictures of paper — unreadable to assistive tools.

See Part 4

THE MOST COMMON PROBLEM OF ALL

Is your text easy to read?

Light gray text on a white background is the #1 problem on the web. It's hard on older eyes, hard in sunlight, and it fails the standard.

✗ TOO LIGHT

Fresh Fraser
firs

Many customers can't read
this

✓ EASY TO READ

Fresh Fraser
firs

Clear for everyone

THE FIX

Use **dark text on a light background** (or the reverse). If you have to squint at it on your phone in daylight, your customers do too. Any web person can adjust this in minutes.

GIVE EVERY PHOTO A DESCRIPTION

Describe your trees in words.

A short written description (called "alt text") lets screen-reading software tell a blind customer what's in each photo. Without it, they hear only a file name — or silence.



× DON'T
IMG_2043.jpg



✓ DO
"7-foot Fraser fir, freshly cut and netted, ready for pickup."

THE FIX

When you upload a photo, fill in the **description box** your website builder provides. One plain sentence per image. It also helps your farm show up in Google searches.

THIS IS WHERE YOU LOSE THE SALE

If they can't fill the form, they can't buy.

Order forms, wreath pre-orders, contact forms, online checkout — each box needs a clear label the customer's software can read aloud. A gray hint that vanishes when you start typing doesn't count.

-
- ✓ **Label every box**
"Name", "Pickup date", "Tree size" — visible and clear, right next to the field.
 - ✓ **Say what went wrong**
If a form won't submit, explain the error in plain words, not just a red outline.

THE FIX

Make sure **every field has a visible label** and error messages are written in plain English. This is the difference between a completed order and an abandoned cart.

PART 4 — DON'T FORGET YOUR PDFS

Your price lists and forms count **too.**

A great website can still get you in trouble if the documents you post — price lists, order forms, tree-care guides — can't be read by assistive tools. This is an easy one to overlook.

Four ways a PDF trips people up.

PRICE LISTS

Scanned pictures of paper

If you scanned your price list, it's just an image. Screen readers can't read a single word of it.

ORDER FORMS

Forms you can't fill in

A PDF order form with no fillable boxes or labels shuts out anyone using assistive software.

CARE GUIDES

No headings or structure

A wall of text with no real headings is exhausting to navigate for screen-reader users.

EVERYTHING

No descriptions on images

Charts, logos, and photos inside the PDF need written descriptions, same as on your website.

PART 5 — WHERE TO START

You don't have to do it **all at once**.

Start with a quick check, fix the big three, and get help for the rest.
Here's a simple plan you can take home and act on this week.

Your take-home checklist.



Run a free check

Use a free tool like WAVE or your browser's built-in checker to scan your homepage.



Describe your photos

Add one plain sentence to each image. Bonus: it helps you show up in Google.



Get a pro to check the rest

Ask your web person, or hire an accessibility specialist for a full review once a year.



Fix the big three

Darken light text, add photo descriptions, and label your forms. These cover most complaints.



Replace scanned PDFs

Put price lists and forms on a normal web page, or rebuild them as real fillable documents.



Never ignore a demand letter

If one arrives, call a lawyer that same day. Do not throw it away or wait it out.

LET'S TALK

Questions?

An accessible website keeps your customers **and** keeps the lawyers away. Start with the checklist, fix the big three, and reach out if you'd like help.

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Based on the WCAG 2.1
guidelines



NEED A HAND?

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