

Toolbox Talks



Maintaining Exits for Means of Egress

Having a safe and efficient means of leaving a building or facility can enable people to successfully escape the building in an emergency. Panic, confusion, poor visibility, and lack of information FREQUENTLY cause more injuries and fatalities than actual workplace hazards. Do you know where all the exits are? Are you sure the doors will be unlocked and not blocked? Knowing the answers to these questions could keep you safe during an emergency. The following are guidelines only. Please consult NFPA 101, Life Safety Code for specific requirements.

Exit Markings Requirements

- Are the exits marked by clearly visible signs with the word EXIT in plainly legible letters at least 6 inches high and with at least a 3/4" width?
- Are the exit signs illuminated either by internal or external means by a "reliable" light source giving a value of not less than 5 foot-candles on the illuminated surface?
- Is the lighting for exit routes adequate for employees with normal vision?
- Is the line-of-site to exit signs clearly visible? When the way to an exit is not readily apparent, signs or markings leading to the exit shall be provided.
- Are the doors, passageways, and stairways which might be mistaken for egress clearly marked "NOT AN EXIT" or with other labeling to show actual use such as "closet", "basement", etc.?
- Means of egress shall have a minimum ceiling height of 7 feet, 6 inches and any projection from the ceiling (lights, etc.) shall be at least 6 feet, 8 inches from the floor.
- Where a means of egress is not substantially level, such differences in elevation shall be negotiated by stairs or ramps.
- Routes of exit access shall never be toward a high hazard location, unless effectively shielded.
- Exits must be always unlocked and readily accessible, unobstructed by materials, equipment or decorations.

Design Requirements of Exits

- Are the exit routes a permanent part of the workplace? The path of egress travel must be obvious and direct.
- An exit access must be at least 28 inches wide.
- Exit routes can be connected to rooms only by side hinged doors, which must swing out in the direction of travel.
- Mirrors must not be placed on or near exit doors.
- Exit route doors must unlock from the inside.
- When multiple exits are required for a floor, at least two of the exits shall be separated from each other as far as possible to minimize chances of more than one being blocked.
- Exits must lead directly outside or to a street, walkway, refuge area, or public way with no dead ends longer than 20 feet.
- Where exit doors open directly onto any street, alley, or other area frequented by vehicles, are adequate barriers and warnings provided to prevent employees from stepping directly into the path of traffic?
- The outdoor exit route must be covered if snow or ice is likely to accumulate along the route, unless the employer can demonstrate that any snow or ice accumulation will be immediately removed.
- The outdoor exit route must have guardrails to protect unenclosed sides if a fall hazard exists.

