

Building and Plant Entrances and Exits

Description:

The regulations set minimum standards for providing for safe employee exit from workplaces in the event of a fire or other emergency.

Regulatory Reference:

29 CFR Part 1910 Subpart E Means of Egress
29 CFR §1910.35 Definitions,
29 CFR §1910.36 General requirements
29 CFR §1910.37 Means of egress, general

Related:

29 CFR §1910.110 Storage and handling of LP-gases, §1910.110 (d)(12)(iv)

Applies to:

All places of employment and workplaces that do not fall under a more specific standard such as confined spaces, or standards that arise out of the Americans With Disabilities Act. The standard does not apply to exits from vehicles, vessels, or other mobile structures.

General Requirements:

1. Every building or structure, new or old, designed for human occupancy shall be provided with exits sufficient to permit the prompt escape of occupants in case of fire or other emergency. The design of exits and other safeguards shall be such that reliance for safety to life in case of fire or other emergency will not depend solely on any single safeguard; additional safeguards shall be provided for life safety in case any single safeguard is ineffective due to some human or mechanical failure.
2. Every building or structure shall be so constructed, arranged, equipped, maintained, and operated as to avoid undue danger to the lives and safety of its occupants from fire, smoke, fumes, or resulting panic during the period of time reasonably necessary for escape from the building or structure in case of fire or other emergency.
3. Every building or structure shall be provided with exits of kinds, numbers, location, and capacity appropriate to the individual building or structure, with due regard to the character of the occupancy, the number of persons exposed, the fire protection available, and the height and type of construction of the building or structure, to afford all occupants convenient facilities for escape.
4. In every building or structure exits shall be so arranged and maintained as to provide free and unobstructed egress from all parts of the building or structure at all times when it is occupied. No lock or fastening to prevent free escape from the inside of any building shall be installed.

5. Every exit shall be clearly visible or the route to reach it shall be conspicuously indicated in such a manner that every occupant of every building or structure who is physically and mentally capable will readily know the direction of escape from any point, and each path of escape, in its entirety, shall be so arranged or marked that the way to a place of safety outside is unmistakable. Any doorway or passageway not constituting an exit or way to reach an exit, but of such a character as to be subject to being mistaken for an exit, shall be so arranged or marked as to minimize its possible confusion with an exit and the resultant danger of persons endeavoring to escape from fire finding themselves trapped in a dead-end space, such as a cellar or storeroom, from which there is no other way out.
6. In every building or structure equipped for artificial illumination, adequate and reliable illumination shall be provided for all exit facilities.
7. In every building or structure of such size, arrangement, or occupancy that a fire may not itself provide adequate warning to occupants, fire alarm facilities shall be provided where necessary to warn occupants of the existence of fire so that they may escape, or to facilitate the orderly conduct of fire exit drills.
8. Every building or structure, section, or area thereof of such size, occupancy, and arrangement that the reasonable safety of numbers of occupants may be endangered by the blocking of any single means of egress due to fire or smoke, shall have at least two means of egress remote from each other, so arranged as to minimize any possibility that both may be blocked by any one fire or other emergency conditions.
9. No existing building shall be occupied during repairs or alterations unless all existing exits and any existing fire protection are continuously maintained, or in lieu thereof other measures are taken which provide equivalent safety.
10. No flammable or explosive substances or equipment for repairs or alterations shall be introduced in a building of normally low or ordinary hazard classification while the building is occupied, unless the condition of use and safeguards provided are such as not to create any additional danger or handicap to egress beyond the normally permissible conditions in the building.
11. Every required exit, way of approach thereto, and way of travel from the exit into the street or open space, shall be continuously maintained free of all obstructions or impediments to full instant use in the case of fire or other emergency.
12. Every automatic sprinkler system, fire detection and alarm system, exit lighting, fire door, and other item of equipment, where provided, shall be continuously in proper operating condition.
13. The minimum width of any way of exit access shall in no case be less than 28 inches. Where a single way of exit access leads to an exit, its capacity in terms of width shall be at least equal to the required capacity of the exit to which it leads. Where more than one way of exit access leads to an exit, each shall have a width adequate for the number of persons it must accommodate.
14. *Headroom.* Means of egress shall be so designed and maintained as to provide adequate headroom, but in no case shall the ceiling height be less than 7 feet 6 inches nor any projection from the ceiling be less than 6 feet 8 inches from the floor.

15. Where accumulation of snow or ice is likely because of the climate, the exterior way of exit access shall be protected by a roof, unless it serves as the sole normal means of access to the rooms or spaces served, in which case it may be assumed that snow and ice will be regularly removed in the course of normal occupancy.
16. All exits shall discharge directly to the street, or to a yard, court, or other open space that gives safe access to a public way. The streets to which the exits discharge shall be of width adequate to accommodate all persons leaving the building. Yards, courts, or other open spaces to which exits discharge shall also be of adequate width and size to provide all persons leaving the building with ready access to the street.
17. Exits shall be continuously maintained free of all obstructions or impediments to full instant use in the case of fire or other emergency. No furnishings, decorations, or other objects shall be so placed as to obstruct exits, or access to exits, or visibility of exits.
18. No furnishings or decorations of an explosive or highly flammable character shall be used in any occupancy.
19. Exits shall be marked by a readily visible sign. Access to exits shall be marked by readily visible signs in all cases where the exit or way to reach it is not immediately visible to the occupants.
20. Any door, passage, or stairway which is neither an exit nor a way of exit access, and which is so located or arranged as to be likely to be mistaken for an exit, shall be identified by a sign reading "Not an Exit" or similar designation, or shall be identified by a sign indicating its actual character, such as "To Basement," "Storeroom," "Linen Closet," or the like.
21. Every exit sign shall be distinctive in color and shall provide contrast with decorations, interior finish, or other signs.
22. A sign reading "Exit", or similar designation, with an arrow indicating the directions, shall be placed in every location where the direction of travel to reach the nearest exit is not immediately apparent.
23. Every exit sign shall be suitably illuminated by a reliable light source giving a value of not less than 5 foot-candles on the illuminated surface. Artificial lights giving illumination to exit signs other than the internally illuminated types shall have screens, discs, or lenses of not less than 25 square inches area made of translucent material to show red or other specified designating color on the side of the approach.
24. Each internally illuminated exit sign shall be provided in all occupancies where reduction of normal illumination is permitted.
25. Every exit sign shall have the word "Exit" in plainly legible letters not less than 6 inches high, with the principal strokes of letters not less than three-fourths-inch wide.

Training Requirements:

There are no prescribed training requirements for these regulations. However, the coordination of the exit standards with Emergency Action Plans, employee alarm procedures, and any emergency drills should include exit rule training to ensure that employees know the rules for maintaining exit access and the on-going need to prevent exit obstructions.

Maintenance and Review

Managers and supervisors should conduct periodic facility inspections to verify proper exit marking, that exits are not obstructed and are properly maintained. Consideration should be given to proper exit maintenance when reviewing Emergency Action Plans and conducting related drills and training. Any training and drills should be documented including the dates and names of the participants.

Additional Information and Resources

NFPA 101B, *Code for Means of Egress for Buildings and Structures*, National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA

NFPA 72, *National Fire Alarm Code*, National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA

NFPA 80, *Standard for Fire Doors, Fire Windows*, National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA

NFPA 25, *Inspection, Testing and Maintenance of Water-Based Fire Protection Systems*, National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA

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