

LOSS CONTROL

Information Bulletin

EMERGENCY EXIT ROUTES

How would you escape from your workplace in an emergency? Do you know where all the exits are in case your first choice is too crowded? Are you sure the doors will be unlocked and that the exit access, such as a hallway, will not be blocked during a fire, explosion, or other crisis? Knowing the answers to these questions could keep you safe during an emergency.

WHAT IS AN EXIT ROUTE?

An exit route is a continuous and unobstructed path of exit travel from any point within a workplace to a place of safety. An exit route consists of three parts:

Exit Access-portion of an exit route that leads to an exit

Exit-portion of an exit route that is generally separated from other areas to provide a protected way of travel to the exit discharge

Exit Discharge-part of the exit route that leads directly outside or to a street, walkway, refuge area, public way, or open space with access to the outside

HOW MANY EXIT ROUTES MUST A WORKPLACE HAVE?

Normally, a workplace must have at least two exit routes to permit prompt evacuation of employees, and other building occupants during an emergency. More than two exits are required, however, if the number of employees, size of the building, or arrangement of the workplace will not allow employees to evacuate safely. Exit routes must be located as far away as practical from each other in case one is blocked by fire or smoke.

Exception: If the number of employees, the size of the building, its occupancy, or the arrangement of the workplace allows all employees to evacuate safely during an emergency, one exit route is permitted.

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS FOR EXIT ROUTES?

Exit routes must be permanent parts of the workplace.

Exit discharges must lead directly outside or to a street, walkway, refuge area, public way, or open space with access to the outside.

Exit route doors must be unlocked from the inside.

Exit routes must support the maximum permitted occupant load for each floor served.

Ceilings of exit routes must be at least 7 feet, 6 inches high.

An exit access must be at least 28 inches wide at all points.

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WHAT ARE THE OPERATIONAL FEATURES FOR EXIT ROUTES?

- Keep exit routes free of explosive or highly flammable furnishings
- Arrange exit routes so employees will not have to travel toward a high-hazard area
- Ensure that exit routes are unobstructed
- Providing lighting for exit routes adequate for employees with normal vision
- Keep exit route doors free of decorations or signs that obscure visibility
- Post signs along the exit access indicating the direction of travel to nearest exit
- Mark doors or passages along an exit access that could be mistaken for an exit
- Install “EXIT” signs in plainly legible letters
- Maintain exit routes during construction, repairs, or alterations

If you have 10 or fewer employees, you may communicate your emergency action plan orally. If you have more than 10 employees, your plan must be written, kept in the workplace, and available for employee review.

WHAT ARE THE MINIMUM ELEMENTS OF AN EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN?

1. Procedure for reporting fires and other emergencies
2. Procedure for emergency evacuation, including the type of evacuation and exit route assignments
3. Procedure for employees who stay behind to continue critical working operations
4. Procedure to account for all employees after evacuation
5. Procedure for employees performing rescue or medical duties
6. Name or job title of employees to contact for detailed plan information
7. Alarm system to alert workers
8. In addition, you must designate and train employees to assist in a safe and orderly evacuation of other employees. Conduct practice evacuation drills so everyone will be familiar with procedure.

Please contact your County EMA Director to initiate these procedures.

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