

EXIT ROUTES

In the event of an emergency, employees need clear and defined exit routes to move quickly to safety. Exit routes must be free of hazards and maintained to allow unhindered movement. Special care should be taken to ensure adequate lighting, signage and safe egress.

Keep in mind that some jurisdictions may have their own codes for exit signage and illumination. Consideration should be given to discussing these topics with the local fire marshal.



EXIT ROUTES



LIGHTING

Exit routes, including stairs, aisles, corridors and ramps, must have emergency lighting that stays illuminated for a period of at least one and a half hours after a power failure.

Emergency lighting must be tested per the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards. These standards define both monthly and yearly testing requirements:

- For battery-powered emergency lights, there must be monthly test to ensure a full 30 seconds of illumination. This test often reveals a battery that will not hold a charge or a bad bulb.
- An annual test must be conducted where lights are activated for a full hour and a half to simulate a long-term power outage event.
- If emergency lighting is activated by a generator, follow all of the manufacturer's recommended testing procedures.
- All tests should be documented and retained.



Emergency lighting must be tested monthly and yearly.

EXIT SIGNS

- Readily visible exit signs must clearly indicate the path of egress travel to exits and within exits where it is not immediately visible to the occupants.
- Decorations, furnishings and equipment should not block the line of sight to exit signs.
- If not internally lit, exits signs must have outside illumination to ensure they are legible in both normal and emergency exit lighting modes.



EXIT DOORS

- Exit doors should be equipped with fire exit hardware that make the doors easy to open in an emergency. This equipment typically consists of bars or strips rather than knobs or handles. "Panic" hardware is required for some occupancies. Consult the Life Safety Code (NFPA 101) or the local fire marshall to determine installation.
- Exit doors must open outward, away from the structure.
- Exit route doors must remain unlocked from the inside. Any devices or alarms equipped on the door must not restrict use of the exit route if the device or alarm fails.



EXIT ROUTES

- Exit routes must have lighting adequate for employees with normal vision.
- Exit access—the portion of the exit route that leads to the exit—must be at least 28 inches wide. Ensure that materials or other equipment does not reduce this clearance.
- Ensure that exit routes are unobstructed by materials, equipment, locked doors or dead-end corridors. If exit stairs continue below level of exit discharge, they should be equipped with a gate or other means to discourage continued travel in the event of an emergency.
- Ceilings of exit routes must be at least 7 feet, 6 inches high.
- Exit routes should be kept free of flammable, combustible or hazardous materials and decorations. Exit paths should avoid or be shielded from high-hazard areas.
- If doors or passages could be mistaken as part of an exit route, they should be marked with a “not an exit” sign or signage that defines the room, e.g., “storage closet.”
- Exit discharges must lead directly outside or to a walkway, street or other open space with access to the outside. In addition to keeping exit doors clear on the inside, care should be taken to ensure they are not blocked by snow or other materials on the outside.

- Exit routes must be maintained during construction, repair and alterations.

Employees must be made aware of evacuation procedures upon employment. If an

egress is changed or modified, this information and alternate evacuation procedures must be conveyed to affected employees. More information about Emergency Action Plans can be found in Chapter 13.

For more information regarding illumination levels, sign requirements, exit route design and other detailed exit route information, refer to the NFPA 101, Life Safety Code or the OSHA website under Emergency Exit Routes.



Fire Doors

The opening between the exit access and the exit must be protected by a self-closing, approved fire door that remains closed or automatically closes in an emergency. These doors should not be propped open.

Fire doors may also be found protecting rooms where the risks of fires are high, such as

boiler or electrical rooms. These too should remain closed and not be propped open.

Fire doors have tags, such as the one at right, that show the fire resistance rating for the door. Care should be taken not to paint over or otherwise obscure these tags.



Fire door tag



EXIT ROUTES CHECK LIST

ITEM	YES	NO	ACTION ITEM
Lighting			
Are exit routes equipped with emergency lights?			
Are battery-powered exit route emergency lights tested at least monthly for at least 30 seconds?			
Are all emergency lights tested at least annually for a full 1.5 hours?			
Exit Signs			
Are exits clearly marked, legible and visible?			
Are exit signs self-illuminated or illuminated by outside sources?			
Exit Doors			
Are exit doors equipped with fire exit hardware?			
Do exit doors open outward, away from the structure?			
Are exit route doors left unlocked from the inside?			
Exit Routes			
Are exit routes adequately lit?			
Are exit routes free of obstructions with a clear path at least 28 inches wide, both inside and out?			
Are ceilings at least 7 feet 6 inches high in exit routes?			
Are exit routes free of flammable, combustible and hazardous materials?			
Are doors that could be mistaken for exits labeled to prevent people from trying to leave through them?			
Are exit routes protected with fire-rated doors, and are these doors either closed or self-closing?			
Are fire doors not propped open?			
Are exit routes maintained during renovations, construction and maintenance?			