

Egress and Emergency Action Plans

A **means of egress** is an unobstructed way of exit travel from any point in a building to a public way, street, walkway, refuge area or open space. It includes vertical and horizontal ways of travel such as doorways, hallways, stairs and scaffolds.

Components of an Exit Route

- **Exit access:** Portion of the means of egress that leads to an exit
- **Exit:** Portion of the means of egress that is generally separated from other areas by construction or equipment and provides a protected way of travel to the exit discharge. An exit route must be permanent
- **Exit discharge:** Portion of the means of egress between the termination of an exit and a public area

Fundamental Egress Requirements

Exits and other safeguards must be designed so that a person's safety *will not depend solely on any single safeguard*.

Building safeguards must include:

- An illuminated exit sign (so it can be seen if the lights in a building go out); illumination can be external, internal, or via photo luminescence
- Safety lights that turn on in the event of a power loss
- More than one exit (all with exit signs)

Egress Elements

1. Clearly identified

- Every exit must be clearly visible and marked
- Access to exits must be conspicuously and unmistakably identified
- Doorways or passageways that do *not* lead outside must be arranged or marked to minimize their possible confusion with real exits

2. Illuminated

- Adequate and reliable illumination shall be provided for all exit facilities: both exit access and exits
- Every required sign designating an exit or way of exit access must be readily visible
- Exit signs must meet the OSHA standard in size
- No decorations, furnishings or equipment may impair visibility of an exit sign
- No other distracting displays or signs may be put near or in the line of vision to a required exit sign



3. Unobstructed and unblocked

- No lock or fastening may prevent free escape from the inside of any building
 - Exceptions include mental and correctional institutions
- Free and unobstructed egress from all parts of the building must be available at all times when it is occupied

4. Configuration

- When more than one exit is required from a story, at least two of them must be remote from each other
- Doors leading to exits or exit access must be side-hinged and swinging
- Such doors must swing WITH the flow of exit travel when the room is occupied by more than 50 persons, when the doors serve exit enclosures, or if the room is used for high-hazard content rooms
- Exit access must not pass through a bathroom or other room subject to locking unless the exit is required to serve only the locked room

5. Exterior considerations

- Access to an exit may be by means of any exterior roof, porch or balcony that conforms to the regulations
- Exterior ways of exit access must have smooth, solid, substantially level floors and guards on the unenclosed sides
- Areas subject to accumulations of snow or ice must be covered, unless they are the sole means of access and are regularly cleared of snow or ice
- A permanent, unimpeded, reasonably straight path of travel must be maintained over the exterior way of exit access
- All exits must discharge directly to the street or a yard, court or other open space that gives safe access to a public way, street, walkway, refuge area, or open space
- Streets, yards, courts or other open spaces must be of adequate width and size
- Stairs must be arranged to make the direction of egress to the street clear
- Exit stairs that continue beyond the floor of discharge must “force” persons to make the right choice when presented with a right and wrong way to the street

Emergency Action Plans

An **emergency action plan** is a plan for a workplace describing procedures that employer and employees must take to ensure employee safety from fire or other emergencies.

Alarms

An **alarm** is a trigger that sets an emergency action plan into motion.

- Different signals are used for different situations
- Employers are required to establish an alarm system
- Employers must maintain and test alarms regularly

Information in Emergency Action Plans

At a minimum, your emergency plan must include:

1. Procedures for reporting a fire or other emergency (e.g., emergency phone number, manual pull stations)
2. Procedures for emergency evacuation
3. Procedures to be followed by employees who remain to perform critical operations before they evacuate
4. A plan for accounting for all employees after evacuation
5. Procedures to be followed by employees performing rescue and medical duties
6. The names and job titles of every employee who may be contacted by employees who need more information about the plan or an explanation of their duties under the plan

Employer Responsibilities

Employers must:

- Designate and train employees to assist in a safe and orderly evacuation of others
- Review the emergency action plan with each covered employee when the employee is initially assigned to a job as well as when the employee's responsibilities under the plan change
- Keep the written plan at the worksite, up-to-date and available to employees

Employers with 10 or fewer employees may communicate the plan orally and are not required to maintain a written plan.

Fire Extinguishers

If portable fire extinguishers are provided, they must be mounted and identified so workers can access them. Fire extinguishers must be:

- Maintained in a fully charged and operable condition
- Kept in their designated places at all times except during use
- Visually inspected monthly with the inspection recorded
- Inspected during annual maintenance checks

Record the annual fire extinguisher maintenance date and retain this record for one year after the last entry or the life of the shell, whichever is less.

