



SafetyAlert

We're Serious About Safety

Emergency Exit Safety

Inadequate, blocked or inaccessible exits have played a role in many fire tragedies, including the Coconut Grove, Station Night Club, Buenos Aires Disco fires and the Oakland California Warehouse fire.

In Hamlet, North Carolina, fire claimed the lives of 25 employees and injured 49 more because the employer had locked the exit doors. To avoid such tragedy at your workplace, it is imperative that you ask the following questions:

- How would you or your coworkers escape from your work area during an emergency?
- Do you know where emergency exits are, and where they lead?
- Do you know what to do if an emergency exit is blocked or full of smoke?

An emergency exit is a well-lit, unobstructed, clearly marked, protected way of travel out of the building or out of the area, which leads to a safe refuge. We say protected to underscore that the route should be free of obstacles and any hazards that can impede an orderly, safe exit. An emergency exit route may involve passageways, ramps, stairs and stairwells, as well as a series of doors. It may involve moving from one area or floor to another, or from one building to another. Not all exits are emergency exits, which is why exits must be clearly marked.

Emergency Exit Factors

Factors such as the number of employees, size of the building, occupancy and use, arrangement of the workplace, fire hazards, fire suppression systems (sprinklers), and alarm systems will determine how many exits are needed. There should be no confusion about what is, or is not, an emergency exit door.

- Emergency exit doors must not be blocked or locked when employees are inside the building. Employees must be able to open an emergency exit door from the inside at all times without keys, tools, or special knowledge.
- Devices such as panic bars, which lock exit discharge doors from outside entry are permitted.

For additional assistance visit:

osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/ or fire-marshal.ri.gov/



Exit Safety Checklist

- Is there a formal emergency evacuation plan at your worksite?
- Do you know where the emergency exit routes are in your area?
- Do you know where they lead?
- Are there signs along the exit route that direct you to a safe place of refuge, especially if it is not obvious?
- Are emergency exits clearly marked with illuminated signs?
- Are emergency lights available and in working condition?
- Are emergency exits unobstructed (nothing blocking or impeding movement)?
- Are doors that are not exits along an emergency escape route clearly marked NOT AN EXIT?
- Are doors that are marked emergency exit unlocked (from the inside)?
- Are there periodic inspections of the exits and exit routes at your worksite?
- Do you have periodic evacuation drills at your worksite?



Beacon Mutual offers a variety of training opportunities for employees, supervisors and managers. Please check our seminar schedule for more information. www.beaconmutual.com

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