



Maintenance, Safeguards, and Operational Features for Exit Routes

This section includes the safe use of exit routes during an emergency, lighting and marking exit routes, fire retardant paints, exit routes during construction, repairs, or alterations, and employee alarm systems.

- [What is an exit route?](#)
- [Maintenance of exits](#)
- [Lighting and marking](#)
- [Fire retardant properties of paints or solutions](#)
- [Exit route maintenance during construction, repairs, or alterations](#)
- [Employee alarm system](#)

See OSHA's Demonstrative Exit Routes [#1](#) and [#2](#) to learn how to apply the OSHA standards for exit routes. For further assistance, consult [NFPA 101](#), Life Safety Code.

OSHA's Exit Routes demonstration #1

OSHA's Exit Routes demonstration #2



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.

Maintenance of exits

Exit routes must be kept free of explosive or highly flammable furnishings or other decorations [[29 CFR 1910.37\(a\)\(1\)](#)].

Exit routes must be arranged so that employees will not have to travel toward a high hazard area, unless the path of travel is effectively shielded from the high hazard area by suitable partitions or other physical barriers [[29 CFR 1910.37\(a\)\(2\)](#)].

Exit routes must be free and unobstructed. No materials or equipment may be placed, either permanently or temporarily, within the exit route. The exit access must not go through a room that can be locked, such as a bathroom, to reach an exit or exit discharge, nor may it lead into a dead-end corridor. Stairs or a ramp must be provided where the exit route is not substantially level [[29 CFR 1910.37\(a\)\(3\)](#)].

Safeguards designed to protect employees during an emergency (such as sprinkler systems, alarm systems, fire doors, exit lighting) must be in proper working order at all times [[29 CFR 1910.37\(a\)\(4\)](#)].

Lighting and marking

Each exit route must be adequately lighted so that an employee with normal vision can see along the exit route [[29 CFR 1910.37\(b\)\(1\)](#)].

Each exit must be clearly visible and marked by a sign reading "Exit" [[29 CFR 1910.37\(b\)\(2\)](#)].

Each exit route door must be free of decorations or signs that obscure the visibility of the exit route door [[29 CFR 1910.37\(b\)\(3\)](#)].

If the direction of travel to the exit or exit discharge is not immediately apparent, signs must be posted along the exit access indicating the direction of travel to the nearest exit and exit discharge. Additionally, the line-of-sight to an exit sign must clearly be visible at all times [[29 CFR 1910.37\(b\)\(4\)](#)].

Each doorway or passage along an exit access that could be mistaken for an exit (such as a closet) must be marked "Not an Exit" or similar designation, or be identified by a sign indicating its actual use [[29 CFR 1910.37\(b\)\(5\)](#)].

Each exit sign must be illuminated to a surface value of at least five foot-candles (54 lux) by a reliable light source and be distinctive in color. Self-luminous or electroluminescent signs that have a minimum luminance surface value of at least .06 footlamberts (0.21 cd/m²) are permitted [[29 CFR 1910.37\(b\)\(6\)](#)].

Each exit sign must have the word "Exit" in plainly legible letters not less than six inches (15.2 cm) high, with the principal strokes of the letters in the word "Exit" not less than three-fourths of an inch (1.9 cm) wide [[29 CFR 1910.37\(b\)\(7\)](#)].

Fire retardant properties of paints or solutions

Fire retardant paints or solutions must be renewed as often as necessary to maintain their fire retardant properties [[29 CFR 1910.37\(c\)](#)].

Exit route maintenance during construction, repairs, or alterations

During new construction, employees must not occupy a workplace until the exit routes required by this subpart are completed and ready for employee use for the portion of the workplace they occupy [[29 CFR 1910.37\(d\)\(1\)](#)].

During repairs or alterations, employees must not occupy a workplace unless the exit routes required by this subpart are available and existing fire protections are maintained, or until alternate fire protection is furnished that provides an equivalent level of safety [[29 CFR 1910.37\(d\)\(2\)](#)].

Employees must not be exposed to hazards of flammable or explosive substances or equipment used

during construction, repairs, or alterations, that are beyond the normal permissible conditions in the workplace, or that would impede exiting the workplace [[29 CFR 1910.37\(d\)\(3\)](#)].

Employee alarm system

Employers must install and maintain an operable employee alarm system that has a distinctive signal to warn employees of fire or other emergencies, unless employees can promptly see or smell a fire or other hazard in time to provide adequate warning to them. The employee alarm system must comply with [29 CFR 1910.165](#) [[29 CFR 1910.37\(e\)](#)].