

Construction activities and exit routes: What you need to know

Construction companies often perform renovation and new construction on buildings where other employees are working (*i.e.*, an office building, warehouse, or factory) or living (*i.e.*, an apartment building). The danger to people working, or living, in the building must always be minimized.

During such construction, remember to properly provide and maintain exit routes.

If employees are working at the location and will be moving into the area of new construction, make sure an adequate number of appropriate exit routes are available. Don't allow employees to occupy a workplace under construction until these routes are available.

During building repair activities, people may only occupy the location as long as all exits and existing fire protection is maintained or if alternate, equally protective, fire protection is provided.

Sprinkler systems, alarm systems, fire doors, exit lighting, and any other safeguards to protect people during an emergency must be maintained in proper working order at all times.

When flammable or explosive materials are used during construction:

- People may not be exposed to hazards that are not otherwise present, and
- Emergency escape may not be impeded by the use of these materials.

Keep exit routes free of highly flammable furnishings or other decorations. When the location contains fire retardant paints or other coatings, their fire retardant properties must be maintained.

Remember these other requirements

Consider the following:

- Keep exit routes free of obstructing material or equipment and be sure there is adequate lighting.

Keep exit routes free of highly flammable furnishings or decorations.

- Keep exit doors free of decorations or other signs that might obscure visibility. If the direction of travel is not immediately apparent, post signs to indicate the direction of travel to the exit.
- Distinctly mark all doorways or passages that could be mistaken for an exit with a sign stating "Not an Exit" or indicating its actual use, such as "To Basement," "Storeroom," or "Linen Closet."

Make sure that doors leading from a room that may be occupied by more than 50 people, or from a room that contains highly flammable or explosive materials, swing out from the room into the exit route.

- Don't lock exit doors, and make sure exit doors don't have any alarm or device that would restrict emergency use of the exit if the device fails.
- Maintain exit routes so they are at least 6 feet, 8 inches high and at least 28 inches wide. They must be wider if necessary to accommodate the occupant load. These minimum sizes must be met even if objects project into the exit route.