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# Exit Routes

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## Supervising Safety Newsletter

Crew meeting is over and it is time to get to work. Before heading out to work on the assigned tasks for the day, think about what tools, equipment, and PPE are needed in order to do the job efficiently and safely. This thought process doesn't just take place after a crew meeting, it should take place before any and all assigned tasks throughout the work day. It is suggested that employees also take the time to think about what to do in case of an emergency. Do employees know where the exits are and how they are going to get to one in case of an emergency?

A few key questions that should be asked before work starts are:

- How to escape from the work area in an emergency?
- Where are all the exits in case the first choice is too crowded or blocked?
- Will the doors be unlocked and will the exit access, such as a hallway, not be blocked during a fire, explosion, or other crisis?

Knowing the answer to these three questions could keep us safe during an emergency.

Here are some answers to a few questions about exit routes, how many are needed, design requirements, and maintaining them.

### 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 – includes the rooms and building spaces people occupy and the doors, aisles, corridors, unenclosed stairs, and unenclosed ramps that are traversed to reach 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.

### How Many Exit Routes Must a Workplace Have?

Normally, a workplace must have at least two exit routes to permit prompt evacuation of employees and other building occupants during an emergency. More than two exits are required if the number of employees, size of the building, or arrangement of the workplace will not allow employees to evacuate safely. Exit routes must be located as far away as practical from each other in case one is blocked by fire or smoke.

- Exit discharges must lead directly outside or to a street, walkway, refuge area, public way, or open space with access to the outside.
- Exit route doors must be unlocked from the inside. They must be free of devices or alarms that could restrict use of the exit route if the device or alarm fails.
- Ceilings of exit routes must be at least seven feet, six inches high.
- An exit access must be at least 28 inches wide at all points. Objects that project into the exit must not reduce its width.

### OSHA Standards Require Employers

#### to do the Following:

- Keep exit routes free of explosive or highly-flammable furnishings.
- Arrange exit routes so employees will not have to travel toward a high-hazard area unless the path of travel is effectively shielded from the high-hazard area.
- Ensure that exit routes are unobstructed by materials, equipment, locked doors, or dead-end corridors.
- Ensure that safeguards designed to protect employees during an emergency remain in good working order.
- Provide lighting for exit routes adequate for employees with normal vision.
- Keep exit route doors free of decorations or signs that obscure the visibility of exit route doors.
- Mark doors or passages along an exit access that could be mistaken for an exit with a "Not an Exit" sign or with a sign identifying its use (such as "Closet").
- Install EXIT signs in plainly legible letters.

By including the thought, "What will I do in case of an emergency?" in their daily routine, employees will be prepared when and if something does go wrong.

Preplanning your work can save time and money; preplanning for an emergency can save your life. **Know where the exits are and how to get to them.**

