



Basic Requirements for Means of Egress

Codes and standards that regulate a building's means of egress may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction so the applicable code must be followed. Exit requirements will also vary depending on the use of the particular building, area, or room. It is not possible to summarize all of the requirements in a single guideline. However, there are some basic requirements that apply to most, if not all, means of egress evaluations. The basic requirements listed below are meant to help recognize when a room or space is over capacity, or that a second means of egress is required. This is only general information and the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) should be consulted for exact information. The number of occupants may vary depending on the applicable code.

1. For any room or space with only one exit, the maximum occupant load should not exceed 50 people.
2. For any room or space with only two exits, the maximum occupant load should not exceed 500 people.
3. For any room or space with only three exits, the maximum occupant load should not exceed 1000 people.
4. For rooms with fixed seating (such as auditoriums), the occupant load should not exceed the number of fixed seats, plus the number of designated wheelchair spaces, if provided. The occupant load for the stage or platform would be calculated separately from the seating area.
5. For rooms with more than 50 occupants, doors must swing in the direction of egress (i.e. the doors must swing out of the room).
6. For rooms with more than 100 occupants, doors should be equipped with panic hardware.
7. Exit doors should be separated by at least 1/2 of the diagonal dimension of the room. In rooms with two doors, but they are very close to each other, they only count as one door.

8. Exit doors should lead to a corridor, an exit stair enclosure, or directly to the exterior of the building. Exits should not pass through adjacent rooms, and should not pass through hazardous areas (such as kitchens, storage rooms, loading docks, etc.) However, in some cases, such as an auditorium where people exit through a lobby, egress through an adjacent room (the lobby) will be acceptable. If there are questions regarding egress through adjacent areas, they should be brought to the fire prevention specialist or building inspectors attention.

9. Exit doors must not be equipped with locking hardware that would allow an occupant to be locked inside the room or space. Exit doors should also not be equipped with secondary locking devices, such as a deadbolt or slide bolt, etc. It should be possible to open any designated exit door using a single motion, without the use of a key, tool, or special knowledge.