Means of Egress Safety Talk

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

MEANS OF EGRESS DEFINITION:

A continuous and clear path from any occupied portion of a building to a public way, such as an outdoor sidewalk. A means of egress consists of three parts:

1. **The exit access –** path within the building that leads to an exit
2. **The exit –** doors to the outside, enclosed exit stairways, and horizontal exits
3. **The exit discharge –** the route from the exit to the public way

Part 1: The Exit Access

When the IBC talks about "accessible," it means that somebody in a wheelchair can use whatever *thing* they are referring to. Therefore, an "accessible space" means that a person in a wheelchair can enter and exit that space via an "accessible means of egress" (i.e. walkway, ramp, or elevator).

Accessible spaces must have two accessible means of egress, and they are typically required to be no less than 36″ wide.

For Non-accessible spaces, which are floors above or below the ground floor, the accessible pathway must lead to an exit stairway, elevator, or horizontal exit. These areas serve as an Area of Refuge where emergency responders will come to help people in wheelchairs.

Part 2: The Exit

The exit consists of an elevator with standby power or exit stairway and the exit door on the ground floor.

Part 3: The Exit Discharge

The exit discharge consists of either an accessible route, such as an ADA ramp or walkway, or a stair and platform with a refuge area.

Another commonly confused word is "egress."

Egress is another word for “exit”, and is used in building code to refer to the means by which somebody can exit a building. For example, a fire escape is defined as a “means of egress” because that’s how somebody can get out of a building if there was an emergency. Most states and townships have building code that requires means of egress on each floor.

WHAT’S THE DANGER?

Slips, Trips and Falls

All roadways, paths, stairs, steps, etc. must be maintained in good condition and must not subject employees to risks to their health or safety. They must be free from **slipping and tripping** hazards and suitable arrangements must be in place to prevent falls.

The most likely injury at places of access and egress to the site are those associated with **slips and trips**. The principal control is the provision and maintenance of suitable surfaces. For an entrance into an existing building undergoing refurbishment, barrier matting can prevent floors from getting wet and slippery. In wet conditions staff must either wipe their feet or the mat will need to be large enough to take approximately seven or eight paces to traverse. Every effort should be made to prevent movement of the matting so careful selection is essential.

HEIGHT

In the context of access and egress, **Principal Hazards** from working at height include:

- items dropped or falling from buildings and scaffolds at the boundaries and entrances to a site
- the placement of ladders and scaffolding blocking or impeding access.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

General Safety Regime

Interior: Buildings/Structures

Recommendations

The condition of all walkways, roadways, staircases, steps, etc. be checked regularly, with suitable records kept. Such checks should form part of the active monitoring regime of the occupier of the premises. Checks should include visual examination of the ground for defects, wear and slipping and tripping hazards as well as checks on the operation and adequacy of the lighting and the condition of handrails, warning notices, etc. All defects must be report and effective repairs undertaken by a competent person.

Poor access/egress may lead to workplace accidents – Floors

About a third of all workplace accidents arise from slips, trips and falls. Many of these accidents are due to poor housekeeping, but others arise from poor conditions, such as defects in the floor, poor lighting and spillages. The **Workplace, (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations**

1992, require that every floor in a workplace shall be of a construction such that the floor is suitable for the purpose for which it is used. They must also be of sound construction and should have adequate strength and stability taking account of the loads placed on them and the traffic passing over them.

Main Entrances

The main routes into and out of the premises may take many forms, such as: ordinary swing doors, powered revolving doors, push revolving doors, automatic opening doors, etc. Where revolving or automatic doors are provided, alternatives means of access and egress should also be considered.

Doors

Doors and gates must be suitably constructed, and where necessary fitted with appropriate safety devices. In particular, sliding doors and gates must be fitted with devices to prevent them from leaving their tracks, upward opening doors and gates must be fitted with devices to prevent them from falling back, powered doors and gates must have suitable and effective means to prevent trapping type injuries and must be able to be operated manually unless they open automatically during a power failure, and doors and gates which are capable of being opened from either direction (swing doors, etc) must provide a clear view of both sides when closed.

Staircases, Landings and Corridors

Staircases should be in good condition, ideally with handrails on both sides of the staircase. The staircases, landings and corridors should be well lit, free from obstructions and slipping and tripping hazards.

Where there are holes in the floor, suitable arrangements must be made taken against accidents (to prevent people from being injured as a consequence of the holes) until such time as they can be made good.

Ramped Pedestrian Access

Ramped pedestrian access (especially when provided for disabled persons) should provide safe and secure access and egress.

Lifts and Lift Motor Rooms

Passenger lifts should be tested and inspected by a competent person at least once every six months although this frequency may be reduced to once in every twelve months for goods lifts that are not used to transport people.

Suitable arrangements should be made for the servicing and maintenance of lifts and for the rescue of people trapped due to lift failure. Lifts should be fitted with a suitable means of raising the alarm. Lift motor rooms should be clearly identified and should be kept locked and should only be accessed by competent persons (such as lift engineers).

Fixed Vertical Ladders, Etc

Fixed vertical ladders are not usually acceptable as a means of access to a work area, although there are several obvious exceptions.

Fixed ladders should not be provided as a means of access in circumstances where it would be practical to install a staircase. Access between floors should not normally be by way of ladders (or steep stairs), although these may be used where a conventional staircase cannot be accommodated. It should be noted that stairs are much safer than ladders; especially when loads are to be carried.

External Areas and Building Façade

The external areas of the premises should be inspected regularly, including checks on the condition of the building façade and all structure attached to the building, such as lights, aerials, CCTV cameras, flagpoles, etc. Similarly, checks should be carried out for all external areas, including car parking areas, roads and footpaths, fencing, lighting, etc. Any defects should be addressed and made safe.

Fire Escape Routes

Fire escape routes must be kept clear and in a good state of repair. In some instances, these may include external metal staircases and even over the roof escape routes that pass into or through other premises.

Active monitoring of premises

It is recommended that the premises are monitored regularly to ensure that all access routes and equipment are in good condition and are free from obstructions and tripping hazards.

FINAL WORD

“Means of Egress” under OSHA data nomenclature is changing to conform to plain understandable English. By so doing, employers, employees and others will better under the obligations of employers and safety and health protections for employees. “Means of egress” will be changed to Exit Routes.