

EMERGENCY EXITS AND EXIT ROUTES

By: Mr. Gary Hanson, President
American Safety & Health Management Consultants, Inc.

When I conduct a plant or facility inspection, one of the areas that always seem to have a problem is Emergency Exits and the path to the Exit. There seems to be a lot of confusion as to the requirements for Exit Routes and Exit Signs. The OSHA standard 1910.36 Design and Construction requirements for Exit Routes and 1910.37, Maintenance Safeguards and Operational Features for Exit Routes outline the requirements covering this area.

I usually receive a number of questions concerning this area. The following is a list of the common questions and the OSHA requirements for each.

1. How Many Exits are required? 1910.36(b)(3)

A single exit route is permitted where the number of employees, the size of the building, its occupancy or the arrangement of the workplace is such that all employees would be able to evacuate safely during an emergency.

2. Can I Lock the Exit Door? 1910.36(d)

An exit door must be unlocked. Employees must be able to open an exit door from the inside at all times without keys, tools or special knowledge. A device such as a panic bar that locks only from the outside is permitted.

3. What type of Exit Door is permitted? 1910.36(e)

A side hinged exit door must be used.

1910.36(e)(2)

The door that connects any room to an exit route must swing out in the direction of exit travel if the room is designed to be occupied by more than 50 people.

4. How wide does the Exit Route have to be? 1910.36(g)(2)

An exit access must be at least 28" wide at all points. Where there is only one access leading to an exit or exit discharge, the width of the exit and exit discharge must be at least equal to the width of the exit areas.

1910.36(g)(3)

The width of an exit must be sufficient to accommodate the maximum permitted occupant load of each floor served by the exit route.

5. Does the Exit Route need to be straight? 1910.37(a)(3)

Exit routes must be free and unobstructed. No materials or equipment may be placed either permanently or temporarily within the exit route.

6. What are the lighting requirements? 1910.37(b)

Lighting and markings must be adequate and appropriate. Each exit route must be adequately lighted so that an employee with normal vision can see along the exit route.

7. What if there are areas in the plant/facility that block the Exit sign? 1910.37(b)(4)

If the direction of travel to an 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 discharge.

8. Do all doors have to be labeled? 1910.37(b)(5)

Each doorway or passage along an exit access that could be mistaken for an exit must be marked **Not an Exit** or similar designation or be identified by a sign indicating the actual use.

9. How much light is required on an Exit sign? 1910.37

Each exit sign must be illuminated to a surface value of at least five foot candles 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 foot lamberts are permitted.

10. How big does the Exit sign have to be? 1910.37(b)(7)

Each exit sign must have the word "Exit" in plainly legible letters, not less than six inches high with the principal strokes of the letters in the word "Exit" not less than three-fourths of an inch wide.

When you do your internal inspection, please note the above to ensure you are meeting the OSHA requirements outlined.

If you have any safety related questions, or need help with your safety program, please give me a call at 330-854-4577.