

Orange County Fire Authority

Community Risk Reduction

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Emergency Evacuation and Stairwell Signage



Guideline E-02

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Emergency Evacuation and Stairwell Signage

PURPOSE

Emergency evacuation and stairwell signage is evaluated by Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) staff to ensure that the location and information depicted, facilitates safe evacuation of the building and proper firefighter orientation in the stairwells during an emergency. This information is verified with the OCFA's review of architectural drawings.

SCOPE

This guideline provides the specifications for emergency evacuation and stairwell signage to meet the requirements of Title 19 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR) and the 2019 California Building Code (CBC). The information provided herein is intended to facilitate approval and installation of required signage primarily in the building core (elevator lobby, stairwells, and corridors connecting these). Additional emergency signage may also be required by the CBC, California Fire Code (CFC), or other adopted codes or standards in other areas of the building.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

1. **General Requirements:** All new plan submittals and revisions will consist of two hardcopy plans and one electronic copy in .pdf format. All electronic formats will be accepted and may be submitted on CD, DVD or flash drive. These plans shall contain the information and items indicated in the sections below.
2. **Evacuation Signs:** Evacuation signs provide information related to emergency evacuation routes, where to initiate a fire alarm, how to identify a fire alarm, and what to do in the event of an emergency (see attachment 1). Evacuation signs shall be posted in all office buildings two or more stories in height; hotels, motels, lodging houses; apartment houses of two or more stories in height that contain three or more dwelling units and where the front door opens into an interior hallway or interior lobby area; and hospitals and care facilities, as prescribed by Title 19 Section 3.09 and Health and Safety Code Section 13210.
 - A. **Sign Location (display symbol location on plans):**
 - 1) An emergency evacuation sign shall be provided in all of the following locations: all elevator landings, the entrance to every stairwell on each floor (on the corridor side before entering the stairwell or vestibule), immediately inside all public entrances to a public building (in hotels, motels and lodging houses, an evacuation sign shall also be posted on or immediately adjacent to the interior of each guestroom entrance door).

- 2) Identify the location of all evacuation signs for each floor on the plan. If the floor layout is identical for multiple stories, the plan can indicate that information and a separate floor plan for each subsequent identical floor level will not be required.
 - 3) Specify that all signs shall be posted at a height no greater than 48 inches above the floor level to the bottom of the portion of the sign containing emergency evacuation information.
- B. **Sign Details:** Provide a detail of the signs for each floor level (see Attachment 1). Specify that all signs shall include the following features:
- 1) Minimum lettering size 3/16-inch non-decorative lettering that contrasts sharply with the background.
 - 2) Constructed of durable material.
 - 3) Emergency Exit Routes and Map Legend shall include:
 - a. Evacuation routes to stairs and building exits
 - b. Exit doors
 - c. Locations of manual fire alarm stations
 - d. Statements describing both audible and visual fire alarm systems
 - e. Fire Department emergency telephone number: 911
 - f. Statement prohibiting the use of elevators in case of an emergency
 - g. Other emergency procedure information or instructions as necessary (e.g., location of areas of refuge)
 - 4) The floor plan diagram on each evacuation sign shall be oriented directionally as it is seen from the viewer's perspective.
3. **Stairway Identification Signs:** These signs provide information critical to firefighter orientation and occupant evacuation in the event of an emergency. They are required whenever an interior exit enclosure connects more than three stories per CBC 1023.9 (see attachment 2).
- A. **Sign Location:** The plan shall specify that stairway identification signs shall be:
- 1) Located within the stairway enclosure at each floor landing.
 - 2) Posted at 5 feet above the floor level.
 - 3) Located in a position that is readily visible when the doors are in the open and closed positions.
 - 4) (CFC 1023.9) A floor level tactile sign (ICC A117.1) at each floor landing, adjacent to the door leading from the interior exit stairway and ramp into the corridor to identify the floor level.
- B. **Sign Details (CBC 1023.9.1):** A detail of the sign shall be provided on the plans for review. The details shall specify the following:
- 1) The size shall be a minimum of 18 inches x 12 inches and constructed of durable material.

- 2) The stairway identification, such as STAIR 1 or WEST STAIR, shall be placed at the top of the sign in 1-1/2 inches block lettering with 1/4 inch stroke.
 - 3) ROOF ACCESS or NO ROOF ACCESS shall be placed under the stairway identification in 1 inch block lettering with 1/4 inch stroke.
 - 4) The floor level number shall be placed in the middle of the sign in 5 inch block lettering with 3/4 inch stroke. Basement levels shall have the letter B preceding the floor number. Mezzanine levels shall have the letter M preceding the floor number.
 - 5) The floor levels served by the stair, such as B3 THROUGH 1, shall be identified at the bottom of the sign in 1 inch block lettering with 1/4 inch stroke.
 - 6) The level of exit discharge and direction to that level shall be indicated on the sign in 1 inch block lettering with 1/4 inch stroke.
 - 7) Characters and their backgrounds shall have a non-glare finish. All lettering shall be in sharp contrast to the background (light letters on dark background or vice versa).
 - 8) Stairway identification signs in high-rises shall be constructed as required by CBC 1024.4.
4. Other Stairway Evacuation Signage: Other egress signage may be required for stairwells as indicated below.
- A. Visual Exit Signs (CBC 1013):**
- 1) Illuminated overhead exit signs conforming to CBC 1013.1 shall be provided at the door giving access to the stairwell. Floor level exit signs conforming to CBC 1013.7 shall also be provided at the door when accessed from an interior corridor in:
 - a. Unsprinklered A occupancies
 - b. E occupancies where direct exits have not been provided from each classroom
 - c. I-1, I-2, I-2.1, I-4 and R-2.1 occupancies without smoke barriers conforming to 407.4
 - d. R-1 hotels when corridors serving guest rooms are rated
 - 2) Where a vestibule is provided that contains only a door leading into the vestibule and a door leading from the vestibule to the stairwell, an exit sign is not required within that vestibule.
 - 3) Additional exit signs shall be provided on all doors in the path of egress travel between the stairwell enclosure and the exterior of the building.
 - 4) Where a stairway continues below the level of exit discharge, a gate shall be provided at the level of exit discharge to prevent unintentional access to floors below. Visual exit signs conforming to CBC 1013 shall be provided to direct occupants to the exit discharge (CBC 1023.8).
- B. Tactile Exit Signs (CBC 1013.4 and 1023.8):**

- 1) Tactile exit signs conforming to CBC 1013.4 shall be provided at the door giving access to the stairwell. Where a vestibule is provided, the door leading into the vestibule shall be provided with a tactile sign indicating "EXIT ROUTE" and the door leading from the vestibule to the stairwell shall be provided with a sign indicating "EXIT STAIR DOWN."
 - 2) Exit doors leading from the stairwell directly to the exterior shall be provided with a tactile sign indicating "EXIT." If an exit passageway is provided between the stairwell and exterior, the door leading from the stairwell into the enclosure shall be provided with a sign indicating "EXIT ROUTE" and the door providing access to the exterior shall be provided with a sign indicating "EXIT."
 - 3) Tactile floor designation signs shall be located at the landing of each floor level adjacent to the latch side in all enclosed stairways in buildings two or more stories in height. At the exit discharge level, the sign shall include a raised five-pointed star located to the left of the floor level. The outside diameter of the star shall be the same as the height of the raised characters.
 - 4) Tactile signs shall comply with CBC Chapter 11.
- C. Area of Refuge Signs (CBC 1009.9, 1009.10, 1009.11):**
- 1) Stairwell landings and elevator enclosures designated as areas of refuge shall be provided with signs providing the following information:
 - a. Directions to find other means of accessible egress
 - b. Instructions to persons able to use the exit stairway to do so as soon as possible, unless they are assisting others
 - c. Information on planned availability of assistance in the use of stairs or supervised operation of elevators and how to summon such assistance
 - d. Directions for use of the emergency communications system complying with CBC 1009.8.2
 - e. These instructional signs shall comply with CBC Chapter 11
 - 2) Each door providing access to an area of refuge from an adjacent floor area shall be identified by a sign stating, "AREA OF REFUGE." The sign shall comply with CBC Chapter 11 and include the international symbol of accessibility.
 - 3) Each door providing access to an exterior area for assisted rescue shall be identified by a sign stating, "EXTERIOR AREA FOR ASSISTED RESCUE." The sign shall comply with CBC Chapter 11 and include the international symbol of accessibility.
 - 4) Tactile signs conforming to CBC Chapter 11 including the international symbol for accessibility shall be provided at doors leading to areas of refuge or assisted rescue.

- 5) At exits and elevators serving a required accessible space but not providing an approved accessible means of egress, signage shall be installed indicating the location of accessible means of egress. The signs shall comply with CBC Chapter 11, as applicable.

ATTACHMENT 1

SAMPLE EVACUATION SIGN

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

2nd FLOOR – 12345 MAIN STREET, ANYTOWN

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY:

- **PROCEED TO THE NEAREST EXIT**
- **DO NOT USE ELEVATORS!
USE STAIRS**
- **CALL FIRE DEPARTMENT: 9-1-1**

● **YOU ARE HERE**

← **EVACUATION ROUTE**

FIRE

Fire alarm station:
In the event of a fire, pull down on lever to activate alarm.

Alarm sounds like
“WHOOP, WHOOP, WHOOP”
followed by voice message.
Alarm looks like flashing light.

Exit stair:
In an emergency, proceed to stair and exit on 1st floor. Stair landing is an area of refuge for disabled occupants.

NOTE:

1. Floor plan shall be oriented to the viewer’s perspective at each location
2. Signs shall be constructed of durable material
3. Lettering shall be minimum 3/16-inch high, non-decorative, and contrast sharply with background
4. Exit doors shall be clearly identified at grade level(s)^D
5. Signs may also include location of other safety features, such as extinguishers or emergency phones, or special evacuation instructions, such as areas of refuge for the disabled
6. If “9” or another number must be used to dial an outside line from house phones, indicate this on the sign

ATTACHMENT 2

SAMPLE STAIRWELL IDENTIFICATION SIGNS

