

## Education Corridor Separation:

In Kansas, many of our education buildings were built prior to 1950. Unfortunately, this means many of these buildings were constructed prior to the large fires and subsequent lessons learned that make up the foundations of the current fire codes. Additionally, as new information and technology becomes available, the fire codes continue to update the minimum level of fire safety that is required for all occupancies.

This disconnect between when the buildings were built, and the current fire code requirements has become an issue particularly in regard to corridor separation.

Summary of Code Requirements:

NFPA 101, 1991 Edition: (Effective May 1993 – February 2011)

11-3.6.1 Every interior corridor shall be constructed of fire barriers having not less than 20-minute fire resistance rating.

Exception 1: All spaces normally occupied by students have at least one door opening directly to the outside.

Exception 2: Buildings protected throughout by an approved automatic sprinkler system and walls and ceilings resist the passage of smoke.

IFC, 2006 Edition: (Effective February 2011)

1017.1 Construction. Corridors shall be fire-resistance rated in accordance with Table 1017.1

Table 1017.1 for Group E: Without Sprinkler System: 1 hr / With Sprinkler System: No rating

Exception 1: Where each room that is used for instruction has at least one door directly to the exterior and rooms for assembly have at least one-half of the required means of egress doors opening directly to the exterior.

KSFM ENFORCEMENT:

If your corridor does not comply with the minimum required corridor separation, you will be cited for that deficiency. You will continue to be cited for the deficiency during every subsequent inspection until the corridor is corrected to meet the minimum requirements.

FACILITY OPTIONS

- 1.) Provide a properly rated corridor that meets the minimum fire resistance rating, or
- 2.) Provide alternative protection as a compensatory measure such as interconnected smoke detection throughout all affected non-compliant corridors, or
- 3.) \*Provide a letter from a Kansas licensed architect or engineer stating that the current corridor does not lessen the health, life and fire safety requirements.

\* The ability to provide a letter from a Kansas licensed architect or engineer stems from the International Fire Code, Sections 104.7.2 and 104.8 which states "Whenever there are practical difficulties involved in carrying out the provisions of the code, the fire code official shall have the authority to grant modifications for individual cases".

#### Letter Requirements:

- Letter must be stamped and sealed by a Kansas licensed architect or engineer
- Letter must be kept on-site
- The facility must obtain a new letter every 5 years
- The letter must provide information regarding how compliance with the code is impractical
- The letter must state "The current rating of the corridors does not lessen the health, life and fire safety requirements for any occupant within the building."

IMPORTANT: If a facility chooses to provide a letter, the letter will only be acceptable until the facility undergoes a major renovation or remodel. The facility will be required to come up to full compliance with the NEW section of the code at that time.

We recognize that assuring safe exiting during construction can be challenging. It may be necessary to consult a licensed fire protection engineer or other professional for guidance. Wherever exiting is inadequate, the office of the state fire marshal will take all necessary steps to protect the lives of building occupants. This may even include immediate evacuation of the building or portions of the building. In these cases, buildings may remain unusable until the problem is corrected and appropriate planning for continuous safe exiting is shown.

#### **TEMPORARY EXITING FROM ALL BUILDINGS:**

Architects and engineers determine the configuration of new buildings, new additions, and scope of remodeling projects. As the authority having jurisdiction in the matters of building exits, the OSFM will hold the licensed designers responsible during the construction process with the owner. The architects or engineers are expected to perform life safety evaluations at the outset of new work to assure that existing exiting will not be impaired or impeded by new construction.

#### **TEMPORARY EXITING CONSIDERATIONS:**

- If the Building Code requires rated corridors, any temporary corridor construction shall not reduce the rating requirement.
- If the Building Code prohibits dead-end corridors over 20 feet long, the new addition shall not create one.
- If the corridor passes through the area of construction all features required in a permanent corridor shall be required in the temporary one, including the exit discharge to a public street or way.
- If the Building Code requires one-hour fire rated stair enclosures to the exterior of the building, then extending the exit path during a construction project requires that certain levels of life safety must also be extended, even when the existing stairs are non-conforming. The reason is that the travel distance to the exterior exit discharge has been extended.
- If building occupants exit through a corridor to the exterior, it is not acceptable to place an intervening room in this path. This violates the Uniform Building Code.
- The use of "Not an Exit" signage is no longer acceptable by the Office of the State Fire Marshal. It is more appropriate to direct occupants to available exits by better signs and guidance.

The codes have not changed; the Office of the State Fire Marshal is merely reacting to a documented problem, which must not be permitted to continue. With written permission in advance, the Office of the State Fire Marshal has permitted the temporary use of a "fire watch" when an exit system is impaired. A "fire watch" is a compensatory measure that will allow a facility to operate under a supervised level of life safety. Due to the high

number of blocked exits during construction, we strongly recommend a daily program where an assigned individual of the facility walks each entire exit path at least hourly.