

Exiting During Construction:

Exiting deficiencies in buildings under construction continue to pose active threats to occupants' lives. Efforts to educate administrators, architects, engineers, and construction supervisors have not achieved safe exiting. K.S.A. 31-144 requires the state fire marshal to assure compliance and we intend to take additional stronger measures to achieve this.

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.