

KSFM 2025 - 003 - KSFM Prevention Information Release

To: Kansas Schools

Date: March 31, 2025

Subject: Means of Egress

In Kansas, all school buildings are required to be inspected by fire officials at least once during each school year. This inspection may be completed by a KSFM inspector, or a member of your local fire department. Inspectors are evaluating many things during their inspection. One of the most important is a means of egress. Put simply, the means of egress is how you get out of a building. In fire code terms, the means of egress is made up of three components: exit access, the exit door itself, and exit discharge. It is crucial that each of these components are maintained for full, instant use in the event of an emergency to facilitate a quick, safe, and orderly evacuation of the building. Let's take a closer look at each of the egress components to understand why the fire code requirements are in place.

Exit Access. This is the area leading to the exit door, most commonly a corridor. Corridors are specifically designed with safe evacuation in mind and must be properly maintained to comply with fire safety requirements. The design portion includes both the physical construction and the finishes. Buildings are designed so that the maximum travel distance from any point in the building to the nearest exit is no more than 200 feet (if the building has a sprinkler system, this is extended to 250 feet). The corridor width is based on the number of occupants using the corridor, but is required to be a minimum of 72". The corridor must have a 1-hour fire resistance rating, which restricts the spread of fire for that time. If the building has a sprinkler system, the 1-hour fire resistance rating is not required; however, the construction must still prevent the spread of smoke from one area of the building to another. The barrier is achieved through walls that extend from the top of the foundation or floor/ceiling assembly below to the underside of the floor or roof sheathing, slab, or deck above. The designed safety features are just the beginning. Equally important is what is in the corridor. Inspectors will evaluate the contents of the corridor. Artwork is limited to 20% coverage of the walls in the corridor (50% if the building is sprinklered). The ceiling is part of the rated assembly. If it's a drop ceiling, all tiles must be in place and unaltered. Personal items such as coats or backpacks may not be stored within the corridor as these may become a tripping hazard during an emergency. The entire exit path must be illuminated while the building is occupied. In the event of power loss, emergency lighting must activate. Exit signage is required to clearly indicate the travel path to occupants. This is especially important when there are occupants who may not be familiar with the building.

Exit Doors. Exit doors can include any door within the exit pathway: classroom doors, cross-corridor doors and exterior doors. When exiting the classroom, the door should be closed, which completes the corridor fire or smoke barrier and protects the exit path. Classroom and cross-corridor doors may not be held open with

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wedges. Not only would this prevent them from closing as designed, but the wedges could create tripping hazards when removed. Doors within the building are required to be kept free from excessive decorative materials, which would provide additional fuel to a fire. All doors must be readily openable from the egress side without the use of a tool or special knowledge to exit. Thumb turn locks, which require a second motion to exit, are not permitted on any doors. Exterior doors may not be locked against egress.

Exit Discharge. The final piece of the means of egress is the exit discharge. This is the area from the exterior door to a place of assembly. The exit discharge must provide a direct and unobstructed path to the assembly point. This final part of the exit path must be maintained so that building occupants have a safe path of travel to safety. Sidewalks must be level and undamaged, with no breaking concrete or uneven portions that could create a tripping hazard. During periods of inclement weather, they must be kept free of snow and ice. It is important to ensure that no furnishings, decorative items, or equipment is blocking this pathway.

A well-designed means of egress allows for swift and safe evacuation of occupants during an emergency, but it is up to the school occupants to ensure that the means of egress is properly maintained to fully benefit from the design. Being aware of the requirements and ensuring that they are followed are the best ways to provide a safe environment for students and staff.

For questions and to assist you in complying with the requirements, the KSFM has a section on its website devoted to schools.

Please visit [www. https://firemarshal.ks.gov/372/K-12](https://firemarshal.ks.gov/372/K-12).

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