



An **exit route** is a continuous, unobstructed path that allows employees to move from any point in the workplace to a **place of safety**. Exit routes must be planned, maintained, and always usable, not just during an emergency.

Parts of an Exit Route

An exit route has three basic parts:

1. **Exit Access**
The portion of the route that leads to an exit (hallways, aisles, corridors).
2. **Exit**
The protected part of the route, generally separated from other areas, provides a safe route to the discharge.
3. **Exit Discharge**
The part of the route that leads **directly outside** or to a safe area such as a street, walkway, refuge area, public way, or open space with access to the outside.

Requirements and Good Practices

Permanent and Protected

- Exit routes must be a **permanent part of the workplace**.
- Fire-resistant materials must separate exits:
 - **1-hour rating** if the exit connects **3 or fewer stories**

- **2-hour rating** if the exit connects **4 or more stories**

Enough Exits for the Workforce

- The number of exit routes must be adequate for the number of employees and the hazards present.
- Review the **Life Safety Code** and site conditions to confirm you have enough exits for expected occupancy.

Exit Discharge Must Lead to Safety

- Each discharge must lead directly outside or to a safe area with access to the outside.
- The discharge area must be large enough to hold the expected number of evacuees without creating crowding or a second hazard.

Doors: Must Open Easily in an Emergency

- Exit doors must be **unlocked from the inside**.
- Employees must be able to open exit route doors **without keys, tools, or special knowledge**.
- Exit doors must not have devices or alarms that could prevent emergency use if the device fails.
- Exit doors must be **side-hinged**.
- Doors must swing **in the direction of exit travel** when:
 - the room is designed for **more than 50 occupants**, or
 - the room is a **high-hazard area**.

Minimum Size and Clearance

- Exit route ceiling height must be at least **7 ft. 6 in.**
- Any ceiling projection must not be lower than **6 ft. 8 in.** from the floor.

- Exit access must be at least **28 inches wide** at all points.
- Items in the route must not reduce the width below the minimum.

Outdoor Exit Routes (When Used)

Outdoor exit routes are allowed, but they must still be safe and reliable:

- Provide **guardrails** where an unenclosed side creates a fall hazard.
- If **snow or ice** is likely, the route must be enclosed or controlled so it doesn't become a slip hazard.
- Keep outdoor routes **reasonably straight**, with **smooth, solid, and substantially level** walking surfaces.
- Avoid dead ends; outdoor exit routes must not have a **dead end longer than 20 feet**.