



RISKCONTROL360^o

EMERGENCY LIGHT & EXIT SIGN REQUIREMENTS

Most everyone realizes that emergency lights and exit signs are required for most buildings and occupancies, but many building owners do not appreciate the reasons that they are there or how to maintain and inspect them. Emergency lights are intended to illuminate the pathway to the exit door and exit signs show us either the direction to or the exact location of the exit door.

There are some allowances made for areas that have large windows which are expected to supply a level of natural light. A building owner needs to evaluate how much light can be counted on from these areas of the building in order to determine if someone can find the exit pathway. Areas that are usually missed are internal rooms, bathrooms, and storage areas larger than a broom closet. These areas do not have windows and need to have emergency lights.

A common problem with emergency lights is that the building owner has them installed, but no one looks at where the light heads are pointed. Take a look around your building; how many of them are pointed toward the ceiling or side wall?

Most building owners do not realize that there are requirements for testing of the emergency lights. Whether the emergency lights are powered by battery units or by generator power, they are required to be tested monthly and annually. Again, there are some allowances for self-diagnostic units, but this author recommends that they be tested anyway. The requirements under OSHA 1910.37 & NFPA 101 show that the lights shall be tested for 30 seconds monthly and 90 minutes annually. I have had a number of clients ask me if they can take credit for a power outage. The answer is yes, as long as it last, at least 90 minutes and you document the inspection. It is a good idea to label or number the emergency light units so you can document and track the inspections and repairs.



1 | Page



RISKCONTROL360°



Exit signs are usually installed in the correct location, but occasionally the sign is blocked. The more common issue is that the door or the area directly in front of the door is partially blocked keeping the occupants from quickly exiting. There are specific requirements for the width and length of the exit access. Rarely is a tape measure used, but rather one evaluates the access from the standpoint of someone new to the area and are there any impediments to reaching the exit quickly.

If the travel path is anything other than a straight line than it is blocked. If the exit door and access cannot be seen then additional exit signs directing to the exit door shall be installed. Many times when building interiors are changed the above requirement is missed in the planning. Some building owners mark the floor directly in front of exit doors and others place markings on the floor leading to the exit door.

Just as with emergency lights, there is a requirement to test the exit signs monthly and annually. Exit signs shall be tested for 30 seconds monthly and 90 minutes annually. These inspections shall also be documented, so it is also a good idea to mark or label the exit signs to aid in tracking the inspection, and repairs.

Emergency lights and exit signs are like many pieces of safety equipment in that they are never really appreciated until you need them.

This article is published by RiskControl360° LLC . While the information in this publication has been compiled from sources & documents believed to be reliable, accuracy is not guaranteed, nor is any responsibility assumed on implied for any damage or loss resulting from inaccuracies/omissions. Publisher is not engaged or rendering legal advice. Discuss questions with your attorney. Doc # MA-04