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Exit Signs

The State of Wisconsin and the City of Superior use the requirements of the International Building Code (IBC) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Fire Code (NFPA 1) to determine placement of exit signs in new construction. Similarly, the requirements of NFPA and the predecessor to that code are used to determine the required placement of exit signs in existing buildings.

Which Properties Are Required to Have Exit Signs? All commercial buildings including multi-family residential buildings are required to have exit signs.

How Many Exits Are Required to Be Marked by Exit Signs? Since the 1920's all required exits have been required to be marked by exit signs with the exception of the principle entrance to the building provided that there is a clear view of the exterior either through the door, through a window in the door, or through windows immediately adjacent to the door on either side of the door.

Are Additional Passageway Signs Required? In addition to the exit doors, any door leading to the exit door or any exit passageway leading to the exit door where the direction of travel is not evident by the standards employed by the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), an exit sign or an exit directional sign (with arrows) must be installed so as to make the direction of travel obvious.

Which Exit Signs Will Meet the Requirements of the Fire and Building Codes?

There are basically two types of exit signs that are code-compliant. They may be either self-illuminated (usually by a set of LED lights) or they may be photoluminescent (glow in the dark). In either case, they must comply with the standards set down in UL 924 which require that exit signs:

- Be illuminated whether the electrical service to the building is on or off. Meaning that the sign must
 - Be provided with an emergency power supply such as a battery or generator power
- OR

- Glow in the dark.

- \$ Remain illuminated for an hour and a half after the power to the building is cut.

- \$ Be visible and legible at a distance of 100 feet.



- \$ Be UL approved and bear the UL mark. (Refer to illustration above.)

Additionally, photoluminescent signs must receive at least 54 lux (5 foot candles) at all times that the building is occupied or for a minimum of 60 minutes per day. 54 lux is the light level found in the typical office. They may not be utilized to meet code requirements in spaces that are not normally illuminated throughout the day.

Who Must I Hire to Install My Exit Sign(s)? UL listed photoluminescent signs may be installed by anyone since they require no wiring. Electrical exit signs such as LED lighted ones, which are installed in a commercial building, must be installed by a licensed electrical contractor.

Where Can I Obtain Exit Signs for Installation in my Building? Exit signs are available from you contractor, from local building material supply or industrial supply businesses or they may be ordered on the internet. Please bear in mind that, regardless of where they are obtained from, electrical signs must be installed by a licensed electrician

Isn't My Building "Grandfathered" In? There is some grandfathering with regard to exit signs. Older, existing signs may not have an emergency power supply that is required of modern signs. If these signs continue in use in a building, they are permitted as long as they are not replaced. Any signs that are replaced must meet the current code requirements. Other requirements such as for the number of signs or the requirements for direction signs may be retroactive.

If you have any questions regarding the requirements of this code as it applies to your business,
please feel free to contact one of the fire inspectors at the number listed above.