




OCEAN CITY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE
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MEMORANDUM

Subject: Rehabilitation/Demolition of Existing Means of Egress	Memo #: 2022-003
	Effective: March 25, 2022
Authority: Deputy Chief Josh Bunting, Fire Marshal 	FMO Staff, P&Z Building Contractors

One of the key components of the Ocean City Fire Prevention Code, and by adoption, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 101, *Life Safety Code* is the provision and minimum criteria for the design of sufficient egress components to allow the prompt escape of occupants from buildings, while also providing suitable entrance to fire and emergency personnel to effectively mitigate fires or other emergencies in the building.

Where it becomes necessary to repair, replace, remove, or otherwise rehabilitate means of egress components, including stairs, balconies, ramps, etc., appropriate accommodations must be made to ensure the continued safety of the structure, its occupants, and responding emergency personnel is maintained, as outlined in NFPA 101:

“Buildings, or portions of buildings, shall be permitted to be occupied during construction, repair, alterations, or additions only where required means of egress and required fire protection features are in place and continuously maintained for the portion occupied or where alternative life safety measures acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction are in place.”
NFPA 101, 2018: 4.6.10.1.

Required means of egress shall not be closed, demolished, or otherwise rendered inoperable without prior approval of this office. This memo shall serve as guidance to contractors and staff on the process for demolition and replacement of existing means of egress, in whole or in part, in multi-family dwellings and other commercial structures.

During demolition permit application, the owner and/or contractor should provide the following information relative to the building:

- a. Number of occupants expected/allowed to remain in building during closure
- b. Location of expected occupied units
- c. Estimated length of stair or egress closure
- d. Travel distance from dwelling unit entry doors to usable means of egress
- e. Existing fire protection systems installed in the building (fire alarms / sprinkler / standpipe / generator)
- f. Construction and fire protection rating (if provided) of existing stairs and walkways

Where the building is going to remain unoccupied for the duration of the means of egress repair, at least one (1) means of egress shall be maintained for fire department accessibility to all levels of the structure.

Where any units are expected to remain occupied, sufficient available means of egress must be provided to ensure occupants have the necessary number of accessible means of egress provided in accordance with the existing occupancy chapter of the *Life Safety Code*.

In an occupied (full or partial) building under renovation, where the owner/contractor intends to reduce the number of available means of egress below that which is required, the owner and/or contractor may also propose (in the permit application or via supplement), reasonable alternatives for consideration by this office, which may include:

- a. Establishment of a fire watch
- b. Provision of temporary means of egress
- c. Restriction of occupancy of units (entire building/portion effected)
- d. Removal of ignition sources
- e. Protection/separation of unaffected means of egress
- f. Other safety precautions/fire protection

As a component of the demolition permit review, staff from this office will coordinate with building representatives/management, construction companies, and Fire/EMS suppression staff to establish minimum requirements and approve a reasonable life safety alternative to support the repair/rehabilitation of the means of egress to minimize the potential effect of the reduced means of egress available.