

Code Section Guide

The International Building Code (IBC) requirement for means to interrupt the flow of traffic in a stairwell is to prevent people from exiting further down the stairs in an emergency and missing the door to the exit discharge. Signs alone are proven not to be an effective means, but since the building code is not prescriptive in saying what you must have, then the local authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) is often who determines what is allowed. Metal gates that swing in the direction of egress are the most common type of interruption device.

The following information summarizes relevant sections of the International Building Code (IBC), NFPA 101 and OSHA codes. Please note that the language used may not be a direct quote from the code, and this information serves as summary notes; for detailed information, refer to the actual code source.

INTERNATIONAL BUILDING CODE (IBC 2021)

1023.8 DISCHARGE IDENTIFICATION. AN INTERIOR EXIT STAIRWAY AND RAMP SHALL NOT CONTINUE BELOW ITS LEVEL OF EXIT DISCHARGE UNLESS AN APPROVED BARRIER IS PROVIDED AT THE LEVEL OF EXIT DISCHARGE TO PREVENT PERSONS FROM UNINTENTIONALLY CONTINUING INTO LEVELS BELOW. DIRECTIONAL EXIT SIGNS SHALL BE PROVIDED AS SPECIFIED IN SECTION 1013.

NFPA 101 (2018)

7.7.3.3* Arrangement and Marking of Exit Discharge. Stairs and ramps that continue more than one-half story below the level of discharge shall be provided with an approved means to prevent or dissuade occupants from traveling past the level of discharge during emergency building evacuation.

OSHA

1910.36(d) Exit Routes and Emergency Planning. Exit stairs that continue beyond the level on which the exit discharge is located must be interrupted at that level by doors, partitions, or other effective means that clearly indicate the direction of travel leading to the exit discharge.

IBC RELATED CODE REQUIREMENTS:

The following building codes are references of 2018 IBC which can be interpreted as requirements for an approved barrier “Discharge Identification” by a local AHJ. Our egress barrier gate has been designed to satisfy your local AHJ by meeting the following code requirements:

Important Note:

Section 1023.8 references an “Approved Barrier” however is not specific about the approved barrier being identified as a “door” or “gate,” a gray area in the code. The final code requirements are often left to install practicality and local AHJ approval with field conditions considered

1003.6 MEANS OF EGRESS CONTINUITY. The path of egress travel along a means of egress shall not be interrupted by a building element other than a means of egress component as specified in this chapter. Obstructions shall not be placed in the minimum width or required capacity of a means of egress component except projections permitted by this chapter. The minimum width or required capacity of a means of egress system shall not be diminished along the path of egress travel.

1005.7.1 DOORS. Doors, when fully opened, shall not reduce the required width by more than 7 inches (178 mm). Doors in any position shall not reduce the required width by more than one-half.

1010.1.2 DOOR SWING. Egress doors shall be of the pivoted or side-hinged swinging type.

1010.1.2.1 DIRECTION OF SWING. Pivot or side-hinged swinging doors shall swing in the direction of egress travel where serving a room or area containing an occupant load of 50 or more persons or a Group H occupancy.

1010.1.6 LANDINGS AT DOORS. Landings shall have a width not less than the width of the stairway or the door, whichever is greater. Doors in the fully open position shall not reduce a required dimension by more than 7 inches (178 mm). Where a landing serves an occupant load of 50 or more, doors in any position shall not reduce the landing to less than one-half its required width. Landings shall have a length measured in the direction of travel of not less than 44 inches (1118 mm).

Exception: Landing length in the direction of travel in Groups R-3 and U and within individual units of Group R-2 need not exceed 36 inches (914 mm).

1010.1.9.2 HARDWARE HEIGHT. Door handles, pulls, latches, locks and other operating devices shall be installed 34 inches (864 mm) minimum and 48 inches (1219 mm) maximum above the finished floor. Locks used only for security purposes and not used for normal operation are permitted at any height.

1010.2 GATES. Gates serving the means of egress system shall comply with the requirements of this section. Gates used as a component in a means of egress shall conform to the applicable requirements for doors.