



# Five Minutes to *Fire Safety*

## Topic: Exit Signs

When we walk into unfamiliar buildings, the familiar red or green glow of exit signs show us which doors can get us outside. We often take for granted that if the fire alarm activates and the building begins to fill with smoke, we'll be able to see these signs from wherever we are in the building.

Exit signs are the best way for building visitors to know where to go and how to get out. Like other visual aids, though, they only work if they're able to be seen.

**Have signs in the right places.** The Life Safety Code requires exit signs by all exits, unless it's a main exterior exit door that is obviously an exit. Signs are also required in places where the exit or way to reach it isn't clear to occupants. Signs must also be placed so that no point in the exit access is more than 100 ft from the nearest visible sign. (What's the exit access? See the November 7 edition of "Five Minutes to Fire Safety" for more information.) To get more information on where exit signs are required, check out Section 5-10 in the 1991 edition of NFPA 101.

**Make sure nothing blocks exit signs.** Schools, especially elementary schools, are famous for creative kids and teachers. Sometimes the creativity spills out of the classroom and into the hallways and onto ceilings. The Life Safety Code doesn't prohibit hanging art items from the ceiling (although it does limit the amount). However, make sure that anything attached to the ceiling is done in such a way that exit signs are visible from every point in the hallway.

**Provide "reliable illumination."** The Life Safety Code requires signs to be reliably illuminated, whether internally or externally. If your exit sign contains a lightbulb and is connected to an external power source, make sure that the signs will continue to function during a power outage. If your school has exit signs without any sort of internal illumination, make sure there is an emergency light in the area that will shine directly on the sign during a power outage.



Kansas State Fire Marshal  
700 SW Jackson, Suite 600  
Topeka, KS 66603-3714  
Phone: 785-296-3401  
Fax: 785-296-0151