

Designation of Stairways for One-Way Directional Travel in Non-Health Care Facilities

Guideline

Revision Date: 5/29/2020

Applies To: Faculty, staff, students, and visitors entering non-health care facilities.

This Guideline is issued by the University Fire Marshal under Environmental, Health and Safety (EHS) to provide minimum standards for guidance and consistency in designation of building stairways for one-way directional travel to help accommodate social distancing at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor and regional campuses. This guideline is not applicable to state regulated Health Care Facilities.

Summary

A recommendation made by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in helping to control and contain the spread of COVID-19 is by maintaining social distancing in work centers. Social Distancing means avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (at least 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible. Strategies which businesses could use include increasing physical space between employees at the work place. Another way to accomplish this is to designate stairways in buildings for up-only or down-only travel during normal conditions of occupancy.

Stairway Designations

While stairways can be designated for one-way directional travel during normal conditions of building occupancy, all stairways shall remain immediately available to travel in either direction for egress in the event of a fire or other emergency. Stairways which have been designated as "AREAS OF RESCUE ASSISTANCE" or "AREAS OF REFUGE" shall remain fully accessible for use by persons with disabilities at all times. Facility Managers may designate stairways for up-only or down only-travel based on the following guidelines:

- Signage posted shall clearly indicate "STAIRWAY FOR UPWARD/DOWNWARD TRAVEL" as designated and also include bold red letters which read "STAIRS CAN BE USED IN EITHER DIRECTION FOR EMERGENCY EGRESS AT ALL TIMES" at all points of entry.
- Paper signs shall not be be posted inside of stairways.
- Any signs posted on stairway doors shall be limited to not more than 5% of the surface area of the door and may only be attached with adhesive. (Mechanical attachment hardware will invalidate the listing of fire doors and shall not be used.)
- Signage shall not be attached to vision panels/glazing on stairway doors.

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- Selected stairways should alternate between up and down travel at every-other stairway to limit travel distances.
 - Stairway doors shall not be blocked with caution tape or other objects and may not be secured against egress in any way.
 - Locking hardware shall not be installed on stairway doors to facilitate the requested directional travel.
 - Stairways shall remain free and clear of all obstructions at all times.
 - Stairway doors shall not be propped open for any reason.
 - Stairway exit discharge identification devices (gates) shall not be propped open for any reason.

Floor Plans/Stairway Review

Once stairway designations have been proposed floor plans shall be submitted to EHS Fire Safety (EHS-Firesafety@umich.edu) for review. The floor plans will be reviewed to confirm stairway designations in either the up or down direction of travel will not create conflict with NFPA Life Safety Code and/or Michigan Building Code requirements. A site visit may be requested depending upon the architectural features of a given building.

References

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA 101 Life Safety Code 2012 edition.)

International Fire Code (IFC 2015 edition.)

Michigan Building Code (MBC 2015 edition.)

Centers for Disease Control (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>)

Technical Support

Contact the Office of [EHS](#) at (734) 647-1143.