

THE BUILDING SCENE

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Using Elevators as a Means of Egress



If elevators are acceptable as areas of refuge, why can't the general public also use them as a means of egress?

Presently, NFPA 101, the *Life Safety Code*®, doesn't permit the use of an elevator as a component in the means of egress. But elevators can provide access from an area of refuge to a public way. If elevators are acceptable as areas of refuge, why can't the general public also use them as a means of egress?

The NFPA Life Safety Technical Committee on Means of Egress has considered a series of public proposals that would permit the use of elevators as a component in the means of egress. The public proposals, as a complete package, require certain protection features, such as an elevator lobby, sprinklers, and protected power. Depending on the intended use, they may also require additional elevator controls.

In addition, the proposals address the need for more than one elevator serving the lobby.

The capacity of the elevators serving a lobby is calculated based on an assumption that one elevator is out of service.

The action of the technical committee will be available for public review in the 1996 NFPA Fall Meeting *Report on Proposals*. We hope that the public will carefully consider the package of proposals—101-33 and 101-90—and submit public comments accordingly. The following list of considerations may help you review the changes and prepare public comments.

Considerations

- Can the operation of an elevator be made reliable enough to permit the general public to use it as a means of egress during a fire or similar emergency?
- If elevators are considered acceptable for use as a component in a means of egress, should their purpose be limited to increased capacity only?
- May an elevator serve as the second means of egress where only two means of egress are required and provided?
- May an elevator serve to resolve means of egress arrangement issues such as travel distance, dead ends, common paths of travel, and remoteness?
- Since the *Life Safety Code* requires elevator lobbies to have access to at least one exit, may the elevator serve as that means of egress?
- Does the exception in NFPA 13, *Installation of Sprinkler Systems*, which permits the omission of automatic sprinkler protection from certain elevator shafts, apply to elevators serving as a means of egress?
- Is any special marking of the means of egress required where an elevator serves as a means of egress?
- If the elevator is considered an exit, are the requirements addressing the separation of exits applicable (see NFPA 101, 5-1.3.1)?
- What, if any, requirements apply to elevator doors where the elevator serves as a means of egress?
- Should an elevator serving as a means of egress be included in the evaluation of the number and capacity of means of egress that are permitted to discharge through an area on the level of exit discharge?

The NFPA Life Safety Technical Committee on Means of Egress has already discussed most of these issues but is seeking additional input from the public. Such a new concept will likely be of substantial interest to everyone involved in the design, use, and operation of buildings.

The package of proposals consists of a small percentage of the public proposals for changes submitted to the *Life Safety Code*. We encourage you to comment on the reported technical committee action on any of these proposals. ♦



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