EMERGENCY LIGHTS

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Comprehensive Guide to Emergency Exit Signs - Types, Compliance and Safety

Emergency exit signs are a critical component of building safety systems, guiding occupants to exits during fires or other emergencies.

In this guide, you'll learn how to stay compliant and safe with emergency exit signs:

- Where Exit Signs Are Required

- Legal Requirements

- Inspection & Maintenance

- Types of Exit Sign Fixtures

- Local Code Variations

- Additional Considerations

- Summary

Common Locations Requiring Exit Signs

Building codes and safety regulations mandate the use of exit signs in most non-residential and multi-occupancy structures.

Reminder: Every public corridor, stairwell, or exit path must clearly show how to exit the building - even during a power failure.

Exit signs aren't usually required for very small or simple spaces. **Code exceptions often allow omission of exit signs in:**

- *Low-occupant spaces:* Small rooms or buildings with an occupant load of 50 or fewer.

- *Single-exit rooms or obvious exits:* If a space has only one exit and it is readily apparent.
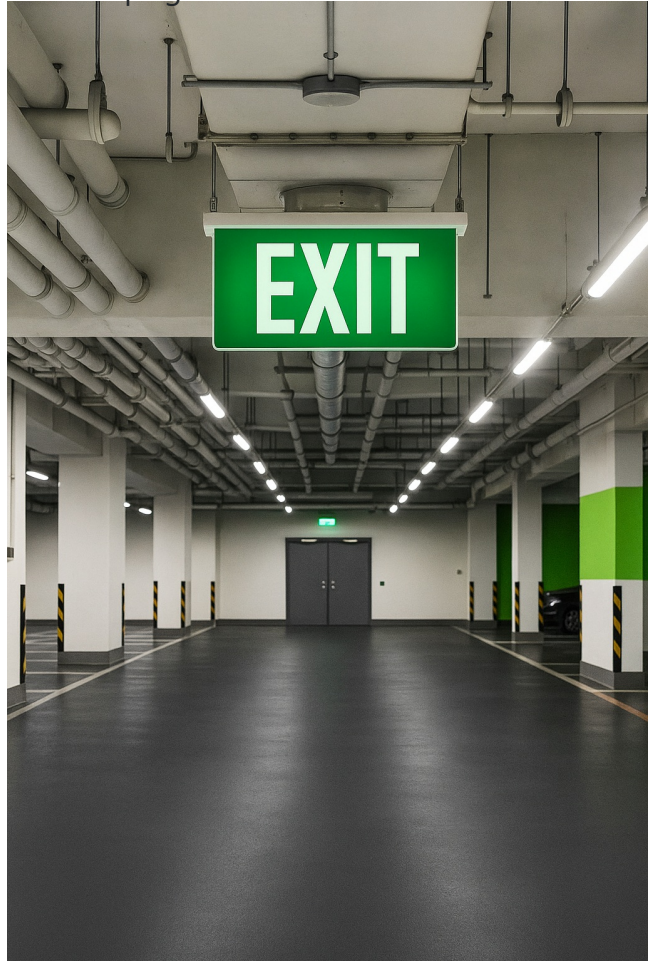
- *Certain residential areas:* Individual dwelling units or sleeping rooms.

However, any area in a public or commercial building where an exit or exit route is not immediately obvious must have signage.

Understanding Legal Requirements for Exit Signs

Exit signs must meet a range of **legal requirements** set by standards like OSHA, NFPA 101 (Life Safety Code), and the IBC.

- **Illumination and power supply:** Must be lit at all times, including during power failure.

- **Brightness and contrast:** OSHA mandates a surface value of at least 5 foot-candles.

- **Lettering size and style:** Letters must be at least 6 inches high.

- **Placement and visibility:** Signs must be visible from any direction of travel.

- **Continuous operation and testing:** Must be UL 924 listed.

Quick Fact: UL 924 is the standard that guarantees exit signs meet critical emergency lighting requirements.

Inspection and Maintenance of Exit Signs

Regular inspection and testing is required.

- **Monthly functional tests:** Each sign should be tested for at least 30 seconds every 30 days.

- **Annual full-duration test:** Run for 90 minutes to confirm battery capacity.

- **Visual inspections:** Check for burned-out bulbs or obstructions.

- **Recordkeeping:** Maintain written records of tests and maintenance.

Modern [self-testing exit signs](#) automate monthly checks.

Types of Exit Sign Fixtures

- **LED Exit Signs:** Long-lasting and efficient. [Browse options](#).

- **Photoluminescent Signs:** Glow-in-the-dark and no electricity required.

- **Tritium Signs:** Self-luminous; no wiring. Handle disposal with care.

- **Edge-Lit Signs:** Sleek appearance with LED edge lighting.

- **Steel Exit Signs:** Rugged and durable. [View steel models](#).

- **Wet & Hazardous Location Signs:** Rated for challenging environments. [Explore hazardous-rated signs](#).

- **Combo Units:** Dual emergency lights and signage.

Why Combo Units? Combo signs combine illumination and exit direction in one fixture â€" ideal for space-conscious applications.

Local Code Variations & Approvals

Some cities enforce stricter signage rules. NYC and Chicago have specific size, color, and technology requirements.

Additional Considerations

- **Power source availability:** Match the sign type to wiring or lighting access.

- **Location:** Ensure suitability for damp or outdoor environments.

- **Aesthetics:** Consider edge-lit or aluminum for design-forward installs.

- **Cost & Maintenance:** LED and self-testing units reduce long-term expenses.

- **Emergency Systems:** Match sign power source to backup systems.

Summary

Emergency exit signs are vital safety components that must meet visibility, durability, and testing standards. Explore our full selection of exit signs, including battery backup, self-testing, steel, and hazardous location-rated models.