



## Means of Egress: Discharge Identification Barriers

No. FP-2009-31 August 4, 2009

**Learning Objective:** The student shall be able to explain when a discharge identification barrier is required in a means of egress.

Coffee Break Training FP-2009-12 described the three components of the means of egress: the exit access, the exit, and the exit discharge. Today we add one more element to better understand the importance of proper egress design: the level of exit discharge.

The “level of exit discharge” in the model building codes is the horizontal plane or lowest story located at the point on or near ground level on the exterior wall line where an exit terminates and an exit discharge begins. In simple language, it is where the exit doors lead to the outdoors and away from the building.

Depending upon the occupancy or use of a particular space, the architect or designer and code official must verify that a certain amount of the exits discharge at the appropriate level. The level of exit discharge also is used as a reference point for other requirements. For example, in schools, every portion of the building beneath the level of exit discharge must be protected by automatic sprinklers.

The barrier in today’s illustration is one element in a means of egress that is intended to protect occupants from bypassing the level of exit discharge and travelling further downward into the building. Stairs that continue below the level of exit discharge must have a barrier at the exit discharge level.

Additionally, stair enclosures that have barriers installed must have signs directing occupants to the level of exit discharge.

For additional information, refer to NFPA® 5000, *Building Construction and Safety Code* Chapter 11, *International Fire Code*® Chapter 10, NFPA® 1, *Uniform Fire Code*® Chapter 14, *International Building Code*® Chapter 10, or NFPA® 101, *Life Safety Code*.



This barrier is intended to prevent a person from inadvertently walking below the level of exit discharge.

