



## Means of Egress: Means of Egress Components

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**Learning Objective:** The student shall be able to define each of the three parts of a means of egress.

Most people readily acknowledge a pair of marked exit doors as a path to safe egress from a building.

In the model building and fire codes, however, the means of egress is more specifically defined so the code official can apply the requirements properly based on individual components.

The means of egress is a “continuous and unobstructed path of vertical and horizontal egress travel from any occupied portion of a building or structure to a public way.” The codes treat means of egress as a comprehensive “system” of components. A means of egress consists of three separate and distinct parts: the exit access, the exit, and the exit discharge.

- The exit access is “that portion of the means of egress system that leads from an occupied portion of a building or structure to an exit.” It includes halls, corridors, aisles, and other walking or escape paths.
- The exit is “that portion of a means of egress system which is separated from other interior spaces of a building or structure by fire-resistance rated construction and opening protectives as required to provide a protected path if egress travel between the exit access and exit discharge.” Exits include exterior exit doors at ground level (like those pictured) exit enclosures, exit passageways, exterior exit stairs, exterior exit ramps, and horizontal exits.
- The exit discharge is that portion of a means of egress system between the termination of an exit and a public way which is a street, alley, or other parcel dedicated for public use and at least 10 feet (3 m) wide and high.



This pair of exit doors is just one part of the overall means of egress.

Solving means of egress challenges to meet the codes can be a daunting task for code officials and design professionals, but the importance of providing a safe means of escape from hazardous conditions cannot be overemphasized.

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

