



COMMON FINDS: BLOCKED EXIT DOORS

BACKGROUND:

Municipalities and school districts depend on clearly marked, unobstructed exit doors to allow staff, students, and visitors to evacuate buildings quickly and safely during emergencies. The requirements for maintaining and operating exit routes are outlined in OSHA 29 CFR 1910.36 and 1910.37, including keeping exit doors free from obstructions and ensuring they can be opened immediately without keys or tools. During various facility hazard assessments, CIRMA Risk Management observes exit doors that are blocked, locked, partially obstructed, or not fully accessible due to storage items, equipment, or building layout issues.

OBSERVATIONS:

Upon completion of multiple site inspections, it was observed that several exit doors:

- Were blocked by storage items and equipment
- Were partially obstructed by storing materials placed within the exit pathway
- Did not provide the required clear width or immediate access for egress
- Were missing signage, or signage was outdated or not clearly visible

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Consider maintaining all exit doors and exit access pathways in accordance with OSHA 29 CFR 1910.36 and 1910.37

1910.36(d)(1)

Employees must be able to open an exit door from the inside at all times without keys, tools, or special knowledge. A device such as a panic bar, which locks only from the outside, is allowed on exit discharge doors.

1910.37(a)(3)

Exit routes must be clear and unobstructed. No materials or equipment can be placed, either permanently or temporarily, within the exit route. The exit access should not pass through a room that can be locked, such as a bathroom, to reach an exit or exit discharge, nor should it lead into a dead-end corridor. Stairs or a ramp must be provided if the exit route is not substantially level.

1910.37(b)(2)

Each exit must be clearly visible and marked by a sign reading "Exit".

1910.37(a)(1)

Exit routes must be kept clear of explosive or highly flammable furnishings or other décor.

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