

5 COMMON MYTHS OF THE BUILDING CODE

INTRODUCTION TO MEANS OF EGRESS SERIES BY MEYERFIRE UNIVERSITY | JANUARY 2023

SUMMARY

Myth #1: “If the AHJ doesn’t catch or comment on it, then it’s OK.”

- **Reality:** All buildings must be designed to code, unless deviations are documented modifications (such as IBC 104.10). It is still the responsibility of the licensed design professional sealing the documents to design according to the building code (not a reviewer’s responsibility).

Myth #2: “Means of egress **can be locked** at all times, **so long as it releases** upon fire alarm.”

- **Reality:** Generally speaking, means of egress cannot be locked. They must be readily openable from the egress side without the use of a key or special knowledge or effort (In the IBC, this comes from Section 1010.1.9). Delayed Egress may be permitted in many occupancies, but not Assembly. Controlled Egress is only allowed in I-2 where the clinical needs of the patient requires locking of egress.

Myth #3: “The **allowable area** formulas in the IBC are for the **total area** of the building.”

- **Reality:** For multistory buildings, the allowable area formulas of IBC 2015 and IBC 2018 Equation 5-2 (Section 506.2.3) and Equation 5-3 (Section 506.2.4) is maximum area of a given story.

Myth #4: “The **travel distance to all required exits** shall not exceed the maximum allowable **travel distance**.”

- **Reality:** The maximum travel distance to the *nearest* exit shall not exceed the maximum travel distance of the given occupancy. IBC 1017.3 has added language in the 2021 edition to clarify this.

Myth #5: “Rooms for assembly use that meet the **Small Assembly criteria are calculated at a business occupant load factor**.”

- **Reality:** Although rooms and spaces meeting either of the Small Assembly criteria of IBC Section 303.1.2 (where fewer than 50 occupants or smaller than 750 square feet in area are Business occupancies, or a portion of the occupancy in which they are located). However, the occupant load of these spaces is calculated in accordance with Table 1004.5 – that is, based on use, not occupancy.



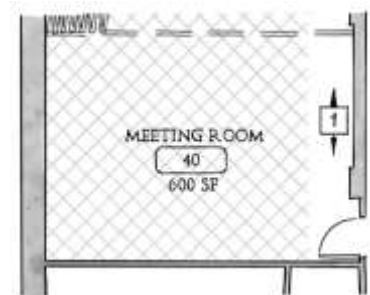
Delayed Egress

(only permitted in some specific occupancies)



Travel Distances

(limits are imposed to the nearest exit, not all exits)



Small Assembly Spaces

(still use Occupant Load Factor for Assembly use)

CODE/STANDARD REFERENCES



- IBC – 2021: Section 104.10 – Permitted Modifications to the Building Code
- IBC – 2021: Section 1010.1.9 – Requirements for Delayed and Controlled Egress
- IBC – 2021: Section 506.2.4 – Allowable Area Per-Story for a Building
- IBC – 2021: Section 1017.3 – Travel Distance to the Nearest Exit
- IBC – 2021: Section 303.1.2 and 1004.5 – Occupant Load Factor for Small Assembly Spaces

VIDEO LINK

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