ISSUE

The referenced code sections of the Philadelphia Building Construction and Occupancy Code contain requirements for information signs required in exit stair enclosures at each floor level landing. Some application issues have arisen over time that need direction for application.

One issue that needs to be addressed is the issue of informing occupants of the direction to egress. While a large number of cases are obvious that the direction to egress is down, there are a significant number of exit stairs requiring travel up to discharge, or in a direction different from the intuitive direction. These occur from levels wholly or partly below grade and from levels in buildings on a sloping site where different stairs from the same floor can require travel in opposite directions to discharge. In these cases, the simple “number of levels to discharge” information is incomplete at best and misleading in the worst case.

The second issue is the requirement to provide information on whether roof access is available from the stair. Again, in a number of cases, particularly in older buildings, the roof is available from a stair, but not directly. Access to the roof requires travel through a passageway, a room, or other intervening space after leaving the stair enclosure. This type of access may still be useful to the Fire Department, but they need this information before arriving at the top of the stair. In the past, a somewhat arbitrary decision was made whether to mark a stair with this type of roof access as having or not having roof access.

DIRECTION

In order to apply a consistent provision for exit stairway information signage, both the Fire Department and the Department of Licenses and Inspections have agreed on the following requirements for these signs in conformance with the code language of the referenced sections.

These provisions include a verbal statement of requirements accompanied by a sample stair landing sign and a sample indirect roof access sign to be placed in the stair at the level that provides the indirect roof access. Remember these are samples only. Actual arrangement and formatting of the signs may vary from building to building or stair to stair.

New signs approved after the distribution of this bulletin are required to comply with the full details of the required information. Upon adoption of the 2003 International Building and Fire Codes under the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code, all existing signs will be required to conform with these details, if they do not already do so. Plan examiners and inspectors should feel free to provide copies of the following two pages as needed to assist in compliance with these provisions.
**Stairway floor number signs.** A sign shall be provided at each floor landing in interior vertical exit enclosures connecting more than three stories. The sign shall contain the following information:

1. The floor level at which the sign is located.
2. The identification of the stair.
3. The number of floor levels to reach exit discharge.
4. The direction to exit discharge using either wording or an arrow.
5. Whether roof access is available from the stair for the fire department.

Where access to the roof is not directly from the exit stair enclosure, but is available through a room or corridor accessed from the exit stair enclosure, the sign shall include the words “Indirect Roof Access.” The exit stair landing at the floor level that provides the indirect roof access shall be provided with a properly oriented floor diagram that indicates the route to the door, stair or ladder that leads to the roof.

The floor level designation character shall be a minimum of 6-inches (152 mm) high and characters for the remaining information shall be a minimum of 1-1/2 inches (38 mm) high. The sign shall be located at approximately 5 feet (1524 mm) above the floor landing in a position which is readily visible when the doors are in the open and closed positions. The indirect roof access floor diagram shall be located at approximately eye level near the stair floor landing sign.
Sample Exit Stair Sign
(Required at each floor landing in each exit stair)

10TH FLOOR

STAIRWAY A

9 FLOORS TO DISCHARGE □ *

INDIRECT ROOF ACCESS

* Alternate wording: “9 FLOORS DOWN TO DISCHARGE” without the arrow.

Indirect Roof Access — Sample Floor Diagram
(Required at eye level near the floor landing sign of the floor leading to the roof access)