



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

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Number of Exits Required From Apartment Occupancies NFPA 101:30/31.2.4

There has been some confusion and discussion about how many exits are required from a dwelling unit within an apartment building. We want to take this opportunity to clear up the issue and assure consistency within the NH Fire Service. The goal is to ensure that all occupants are protected in accordance with the NH State Fire Code. This bulletin will specifically address existing apartment chapter (**NFPA 101:31**) but it also applies to the new chapter. Please review the cited code sections for the complete text.

First it is important to discuss the difference between an exit and a means of escape. An exit is a door leading to a means of egress that is designed in compliance with Chapter 7 of **NFPA 101**, **the Life Safety Code**. A means of escape can be a door or window, but in the case of an apartment it would be designed in compliance with **NFPA 101:24.2.2.3**. An exit is used regularly while a means of escape is only used in an emergency. Exits and escapes are different in their construction and more importantly, they are required by different sections of the code.

NFPA 101:31.2.1.1 requires that means of egress from dwelling units to the outside of the building shall be in accordance with Chapter 7 and this chapter.

NFPA 101:31.2.1.2 requires that means of escape WITHIN the dwelling unit shall comply with the provisions of Section 24.2 for one- and two-family dwellings. The important distinction here is that a means for egress or exits take occupants from the unit to the outside (usually through a hall or stairway), while means of escape are directly from the unit to the outside.

If one jumps right to **24.2** from chapter 31, one would find that a dwelling unit with a door to a hallway and a window in compliance with **24.2** would satisfy the code. This is not true. Later in the Existing Apartment Chapter, **31.2.4.1**, it goes on to require that every dwelling unit shall have access to not less than two separate exits remotely located from each other as required by **7.5.1**, unless one of the exceptions outlined in **31.2.2-5** are met.

Since very few of the traditional triple deckers or homes that have been converted to apartments meet any of the outlined exceptions, this requirement becomes very important. This was one of the most common violations found during the inspections in the City of Berlin recently. During inspections of these dwelling units and the apartment building as a whole, the inspector must ensure that there are either two exits or one of the alternatives outlined in **NFPA 101:31.2.2-5** are met.

As always, if you have any questions or need clarification, please don't hesitate to call our office at 271-3294 or contact us by e-mail at fmo@safety.state.nh.us.