



Exit Discharge (Sidewalks)

The 2012 edition of NFPA 101, *Life Safety Code*, emphasizes the importance of maintaining the egress system at all times.

7.1.10.1 Means of egress shall be continuously maintained free of all obstructions or impediments to full instant use in the case of fire or other emergency.

The means of egress includes the exit discharge, which is the portion of the means of egress between the building exit and a public way such as a street, alley, parking lot, or similar open area. A proper means of egress allows unobstructed travel at all times. Any type of barrier including, but not limited to, the accumulation of snow and ice is an impediment to free movement in the means of egress.

7.7.1 Exits shall terminate directly at a public way or at an exterior exit discharge. Yards, courts, open spaces, or other portions of the exit discharge shall be of required width and size to provide all occupants with a safe access to a public way.

The Life Safety Code is not specific as to the surface required for the exit discharge. However, in northern states, it is very difficult for a resident to operate a wheelchair or walker across frozen grass or dirt. This situation is equally difficult for staff to provide assistance in a timely manner. Because exit discharges to the public way must be kept clear in inclement weather, such as rain or snow, the surface of choice would be an asphalt or concrete sidewalk. This type of surface is easier to keep clear as well as traverse by residents and staff.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has indicated that all required exit discharge surfaces must be an asphalt or concrete sidewalk.