

MSC Guidelines for Review of Access to Stairway Enclosures

Procedure Number: SOLAS-26

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References

- ❑ SOLAS 2004 Cite: II-2/13.3.2.3
- ❑ SOLAS 1974 Cite: II-2/29.2

Contact Information

If you have any questions or comments concerning this document, please contact the Marine Safety Center by e-mail or phone. Please refer to Procedure Number: **SOLAS-26**.

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Reference Text

“Stairway enclosures in accommodation and service spaces shall have direct access to the corridors and be of a sufficient area to prevent congestion, having in view the number of persons likely to use them in an emergency. Within the perimeter of such stairway enclosures, only public toilets, lockers of non-combustible material providing storage for non-hazardous safety equipment and open information counters are permitted. Only public spaces, corridors, lifts, public toilets, special category spaces and open ro-ro spaces to which any passengers carried can have access, other escape stairways required by paragraph 3.2.4.1 and external areas are permitted to have direct access to these stairway enclosures. Small corridors or "lobbies" used to separate an enclosed stairway from galleys or main laundries may have direct access to the stairway provided they have a minimum deck area of 4.5 m², a width of no less than 900 mm. and contain a fire hose station.”

Guidance

This guidance does not apply to atriums or other spaces equipped with an approved smoke extraction or smoke management system. Not all public spaces should be allowed direct access to stairs. Only large public spaces (greater than 50m² and more than 50 occupants) such as halls, dining rooms, and lounges should be permitted to directly access stairs as they present other issues such as the need to rapidly egress a large number of people. This need is balanced with the risk of introducing smoke and fire to a stairway. Small spaces and spaces only serving a limited number of people should not have direct access to stairs because the risk of introducing smoke into the stair is higher compared to the need to evacuate the small number of people. In these cases, alternative escape routes (category 3 or 4) should be provided. Additionally, while the back stage of a theater can be considered common with the theater (and therefore a public space), it is generally not accessible to passengers and not outfitted as a public space. Therefore, these and similar areas should not open directly into a stair.

Background

This guidance has been updated based on industry feedback to clarify the expectations of the USCG in regards to what constitutes a large public space. Based on our recent experiences during Initial Control Verification Examinations, the 50m² and 50 person capacity creates a simple method to determine large or small. Below this threshold, case-by-case discussions will be necessary to determine the balance between egress speed and the risk of smoke spread to a

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stair.

Disclaimer

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