



**SAFETY  
NEWSLETTER**

March 2016



**Special Interest  
Articles:**

Emergency  
Lighting

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**EMERGENCY LIGHTING**

Emergency lighting is often taken for granted that it will work when a crisis situation such as a fire evacuation or weather-related power outage occurs. Unfortunately, when Church Mutual's risk control consultants conduct onsite safety surveys of our customers, we often find that when spot checking these devices that some of the lights do not turn on ... usually due to dead batteries or burned out bulbs.



Most emergency lights installed in worship centers are simple lighting devices that contain a small battery. The device is connected to the building's electrical system, which provides a constant charge to the battery. In the event of a power failure, circuitry in the fixture activates the lights so that building occupants can see to exit the building or while seeking shelter within the building. Most emergency lights are only designed to work for the code's required minimum of thirty minutes on battery power.

Preventive maintenance and periodic testing of emergency light bulbs and batteries will help safeguard that these lighting devices will function when needed. Local building codes address the proper design and installation of emergency lighting, but it's up to each worship center to do their part when it comes to conducting routine tests and making repairs to these safety devices.

**NFPA standards**

The National Fire Protection Association is one of the organizations that provides codes and standards about emergency lighting use in many jurisdictions. Lighting codes and standards identify the required illumination levels along a path of egress and the minimum amount of time that emergency lights need to function in the event of a power outage.

**Monthly tests**

One very important element of your facility's safety program should be conducting monthly tests to determine if each emergency light performs properly, and an annual test to verify battery capacity. The testing process should also involve keeping a log identifying the location of each emergency exit sign or light, the dates when monthly and annual tests were conducted, problems observed, and when repairs were made.

**Evacuation**

Evacuating from or moving about within a building that is dark inside can be challenging due to eyesight limitations and different levels of mobility involving employees, guests, and members. Malfunctioning emergency lights can create stressful situations where building occupants are unable to see and find their way in darkened hallways and stairwells, and it compounds the safe and orderly process of supervising the care and safety of everyone. If a major disaster strikes, you want the reassurance that your emergency lights will illuminate appropriate rooms, hallways, and exits and not leave people in the dark. Also, it's important to make sure your staff has access to flashlights and replacement flashlight batteries to use in emergency situations.

### ***March checkup***

Take some time during the month of March to have someone at your facility check each illuminated exit sign and emergency light to make sure they operate. Normally, these devices have a small "push to test" button on the front, bottom, or side casing that c

test to see if the lights come on and stay on during a thirty-second test of the light. Check with the manufacturer of your particular lights to get more details about the testing procedures for your particular model. Arrange for immediate repairs to be made to any emergence light if the bulbs dim right away, or if some of the bulbs do not work.



### ***Defective batteries***

Many defective batteries will maintain just enough charge to fully light up the bulbs for a few seconds, but they will quickly lose power. If you don't test for thirty seconds, you may find the light work each month, only to find they go out in just a few minutes when you really need them.