WHY NOT USE THE ELEVATOR?
If smoke is detected in an elevator lobby, the elevators are programmed to return to the ground floor. If smoke is in the elevator shafts, there is a danger of people in elevators succumbing to smoke inhalation before the elevators reach the ground floor. There is also the danger of the elevator delivering the passengers to the floor that contains the fire. In buildings five stories or taller, standby power to the elevators is required so the fire department can use the elevators to move personnel and equipment rapidly into the building to fight the fire and to provide assisted rescue.

WHEN THERE IS MORE THAN ONE WAY OUT (I.E., MEANS OF EGRESS)

The IRC requires at least two means of egress from all buildings and spaces within buildings with very few exceptions. Buildings or spaces with 500 or more occupants are required to have at least three means of egress. Buildings or spaces with more than 1,000 occupants are required to have at least four means of egress.

Some spaces are allowed to have a single exit when the interior travel distance (to the exit) is short and the occupant load (number of people that could be using the space) is low. For example, in a mercantile space, a single means of egress is permitted when there are fewer than 50 calculated occupants in the space or the exit access travel distance is less than 75 feet. The distance is measured along the path of travel, not diagonally across the space.

In most buildings, the way in is also the way out. People generally will leave a building the same way they came in since that is the familiar route. However, that is not always possible. A fire could occur at any location in a building. The path used for entry into a space may be blocked. Or, in the case of a multi-story building, the route to the upper floors may include an elevator. Elevators are not used as a general means of egress due to a variety of safety concerns. Occupants are typically instructed to use the exit stairways.

WHAT IS A MEANS OF EGRESS?
A means of egress is the path available for a person to leave a building, structure, or space. This route must not be obstructed, and doors along this route cannot be subject to locking from the side that people will be leaving. For example, the rear exit door of a building could require use of a key to get in from the outside for security reasons, but the door must always be openable from the inside without a key so that people can get out in an emergency. This is especially important during situations that may involve evacuation by a large number of people at the same time and/or panic-type situations.

A means of egress consists of three parts: exit access, exit, and exit discharge. Exit access is the path from any location within a building to an exit. An exit is typically a door leading to the outside or, in a multi-story building, an enclosed exit stairway. Exit discharge is the path from the exit to the public way. A public way is a space that is permanently deeded and dedicated to public use, most often a street or alley.

Isn't the way in always the way out (I.E., means of egress)?

In most buildings, the way in is also the way out. People generally will leave a building the same way they came in since that is the familiar route. However, that is not always possible. A fire could occur at any location in a building. The path used for entry into a space may be blocked. Or, in the case of a multi-story building, the route to the upper floors may include an elevator. Elevators are not used as a general means of egress due to a variety of safety concerns. Occupants are typically instructed to use the exit stairways.
DO I HAVE TO WAIT FOR FIRE DEPARTMENT RESCUE?
It is always best to wait for trained assistance whenever possible. Fire department personnel have special training and equipment for rescue assistance. Some facilities may have special provisions for assisted rescue, including trained personnel, as part of their evacuation plan. The International Fire Code® (IFC®) requires an approved fire safety and evacuation plan for many types of facilities including assembly, educational, institutional, hotels, high-rise buildings, underground buildings, large mercantile spaces, and covered malls. While these plans address many egress issues, they may also include provisions specific to persons who may need additional assistance. Evacuation plans must include accounting for all occupants after evacuation and identification and assignment of personnel responsible for rescue or emergency medical aid. The Fire Safety Plans must include procedures for notifying, relocating, or evacuating occupants and plotting accessible egress routes including any areas of refuge. The plans must be reviewed and updated annually. In addition, all assembly, educational, institutional, and hotel buildings must have evacuation drills so that all employees can be trained to assist evacuation.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE EXIT DISCHARGE DOES NOT PROVIDE AN ACCESSIBLE ROUTE?
When fire department personnel provide assisted rescue, they take people a safe distance from the fire. When the accessible route for entry into a space is also the way out, typically a route is available to the public way. However, there are some situations, most often dealing with that second back door exit, where an accessible exit discharge may not be available or feasible. Steep terrain, snow accumulation, or site constraints, such as exiting directly onto a public street, or alley, may compromise the accessible route to the public way. In such situations, two alternatives are available. There is no exception for sprinklered buildings. One alternative is to provide an area of refuge inside the building. A second alternative is an exterior area of assisted rescue. The exterior area for assisted rescue is similar to an interior area of refuge but it is outside the building. The wall between interior and the exterior area of refuge is required to be fire-resistance rated for a minimum of 1 hour to protect persons waiting in this area. There are several advantages to an exterior area of assisted refuge over the area of refuge. Persons with disabilities have stated that they feel more comfortable being able to wait outside the building instead of in a small interior room. The building owners do not feel that they have lost usable interior space, and the fire officials have less concern over exterior areas being maintained free and clear of storage.

WHERE IS ALL THIS INFORMATION LOCATED IN THE INTERNATIONAL BUILDING CODE (IBC)?
Chapter 10 of the IBC is dedicated to means of egress requirements. A chapter titled Means of Safety is located in Section 1003.2.13 in the 2000 edition and Section 1007 in the 2003 and later editions. The basic requirements in the 2000 and 2003 editions are the same. A decision to break Chapter 10 into shorter sections for ease of use led to renumbering of that chapter. Vertical lines in the margins indicate that a requirement has been revised from the previous edition or is new.

The 2010 ADA Standard for Accessible Design references the 2000 IBC and 2003 IBC, because these were the editions available before the work of the Access Board was completed in 2004. Section 1007 of later editions of the IBC could be considered as providing the same or higher level of accessibility.

WHY REFERENCE A BUILDING CODE FOR THESE REQUIREMENTS?
Model building codes, since their inception, have had as a main focus the issues of public health and safety, including adequate egress. The ICC has a long history of experience and expertise in addressing these issues. By utilizing this expertise, the 2010 ADA Standard for Accessible Design have avoided “reinventing the wheel” and potential conflicts between federal requirements and nationally recognized building construction requirements.

Architects, engineers, and contractors have historically relied on the ICC’s model codes to provide minimum requirements. Requirements in the codes are addressed during the design process, where it is easier and more cost effective to correct errors. Higher levels of compliance with accessibility requirements are achieved through local review and inspections performed by the code official. Finding problems after the building is occupied can lead to expensive retrofits as well as delays in use of the building. Model codes are continually updated to take advantage of new ideas and technologies. For example, the ICC has been participating in a series of meetings with fire fighters, elevator manufacturers, accessibility groups, and other interested parties to investigate options for using elevators more effectively for means of egress, particularly in high-rise buildings. The 2009 and 2012 IBC includes new provisions for Fire Service Access elevators and Occupant Evacuation elevators, both of which will improve the safety and options for using the elevators for fire service access and evacuation of persons with mobility impairments.

ARE THERE OTHER ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS IN THE IBC?
Yes. While some accessibility items have been mainstreamed into the general egress requirements (e.g., accessible means of egress and ramps in Chapter 10), Chapter 11 specifically addresses requirements concerning with accessibility into and throughout buildings. The IBC also references the technical standard, A117.1, Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities. For another brochure with additional information, please visit www.iccsafe.org/accessibility.

ARE THERE MORE ACTIONS PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE?
A goal of the ICC is to meet or exceed federal regulations via the accessibility requirements found in the ICC codes. The ICC has been working with the Department of Justice (DOJ), the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Compliance Board (A.T. Access Board), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and many other groups interested in accessibility through the code change process. All ICC code changes are through a public hearing process. Any individual, company, or organization can propose a code change through this process.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.iccsafe.org/accessibility