INFORMATION SHEET

NO. EG-06

DATE : 10-28-2026

CATEGORY : Egress

SUBJECT : **Secondary Egress for 4 to 6 Story R-2 Occupancy**

PURPOSE : To outline the requirements and application procedures for consideration of alternative means and methods for a local egress equivalency for R-2 occupancy buildings consisting of four to six stories.

REFERENCE : California Building Code Section 104.2.3 through 104.2.3.4, current edition
California Building Code Chapter 10, current edition
California Fire Code Section 104.2.3, current edition
California Fire Code Chapter 10, current edition
San Francisco Fire Department AB 5.08 Fire Service Access Elevators and Occupant Evacuation Elevators, current edition
NFPA 13, current edition
NFPA 72, current edition

BACKGROUND :

The California Building Code (CBC) mandates R-2 occupancy multi-family buildings exceeding three stories provide two separate and distinct exits, or access to exits as specified in CBC Table 1006.3.3 and Section 1006.3.4. To support innovative housing solutions while preserving life-safety standards, this Information Sheet will prescribe application procedures, alternative egress features, and other requirements for R-2 occupancy projects four to six stories with an Alternative Means and Methods request.

DISCUSSION :

I. Application Process

A. **Application submittal and plan review:** Request to use the following local equivalencies shall be accompanied by a request for a local design equivalency approval per San Francisco Building Code, Administrative Bulletin AB-005 and will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis. These requirements do not alleviate and shall not diminish any other code requirements established in the San Francisco Building Code (SFBC) and San Francisco Fire Code (SFFC).

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B. **Appeals:** If the applicant receives a disapproval from the Department during the plan review process of a Request for Approval of Local Equivalency, the applicant may pursue an appeal to the Board of Examiners pursuant to the processes established in Administrative Bulletin AB-042.

II. Minimum building design and safety requirements

In addition to compliance with current CBC and SFFC requirements, the following additional minimum required design features shall apply:

A. **Construction:** The building shall be constructed of one of the following types of construction: Type IA, IIA, IIIA, IV-C, or VA and may be constructed in accordance with CBC Section 510.2 or 510.5.

B. **Maximum floor area:** The gross floor area of each story or occupied roof deck shall not exceed 4,000 square feet.

C. **Maximum dwelling unit count:** The building shall have no more than four dwelling units per story or basement level.

D. **Restricted occupancy:** Residential group housing or residential care facilities (R2.1 occupancy), and Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing are not eligible under this equivalency.

E. **Maximum Height:** The distance from the lowest level of Fire Department vehicle access up to the finished floor of the highest occupiable story (or occupied roof) shall not exceed 45 feet for buildings up to four stories or 75 feet for buildings up to six stories. Buildings of more than six stories are ineligible for the local equivalency provided herein.

F. **Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings (EEROs) and yard dimensions:** Each required emergency escape and rescue opening shall face a public way, rear yard, side yard, or egress court. Rear yard shall not be less than 20 feet by 20 feet, except that a reduced yard dimension may be allowed where the yard faces a public way, subject to plan review to determine Fire Department access on a case-by-case basis.

G. **Rear yard exit:** The building shall provide a 2-hour rated exit passageway leading from the rear yard to the public way, with a minimum 3 ft clear width, a minimum door height of 80 inches. Utility meters shall not be located in the exit passageway.

   Exception: An exit passageway may not be required if the building has a side yard setback providing an egress court from the rear yard to the public way.

H. **Fire alarm:** An automatic manual fire alarm system shall be installed that initiates the occupant notification signal utilizing an emergency voice/alarm communication system meeting the requirements of CBC Section 907.5.2.2 and 907.6. An automatic smoke detection system that activates the occupant notification system shall be installed throughout all interior corridors serving sleeping rooms.

I. **Interior exit stairway enclosure and exit passageway:** Exit stairway enclosures and exit passageways must meet all of the following design requirements:

1. The building shall provide a non-combustible two-hour-rated exit stairway enclosure. Fire-retardant-treated (FRT) wood complying with CBC Section 2303.2 may be considered non-combustible framing when used in Type IIIA, IV-C, or VA construction;

2. Interior exit stairway enclosure shall be within 20 feet of travel distance from each dwelling unit entry door;

3. Electrical outlets shall be prohibited in the interior exit stairway enclosure; and exit passageway;

4. Openings into the interior exit stairway enclosure and exit passageway shall be limited to those required for exit access and egress from normally occupied spaces.

   Exception: Interior exit stairway may discharge through a two-hour rated lobby.

J. **Acceptable local equivalencies for second means of egress:** Each unit and the roof must provide access to one of the following second means of egress that shall be constructed with non-combustible materials:

1. Exterior exit stairway designed in accordance with CBC Section 1011 and 1027.

   Exception: Exterior exit stairway may provide not less than 3’-0” fire separation distance from property line.

2. Escape and rescue balcony, deck, or landing with a vertical component that complies with the following provisions;

   a. Minimum of 3’-0” wide in the direction perpendicular to an opening;

   b. Minimum length shall be the width of the opening or 3’-0”, whichever is longer;

   c. Vertical access components shall comply with CBC Section 1011. Alternate stair design, such as ladders and ship’s ladders, shall have a maximum stair incline of 72 degrees from horizontal. Alternating tread devices are not permitted as an alternative. Any intermediate landings or platforms shall have minimum dimensions of 36-inch deep by 72-inch long;

3. A fire escape designed in accordance with the technical requirements of SFDBI AB-019;

   Exception: a. New building is allowed;

   b. Conditions 1.0 through 1.2 do not apply.

K. **Automatic door closures:** Doors to the interior exit stairway enclosure shall be required to have automatic door closures equipped with a resident alert system that is triggered when doors are propped open for extended period of time.

L. **Bike room:** The building shall include ground-level storage for bicycles and electric personal mobility devices and, shall be hydraulically calculated per NFPA 13 – Ordinary Hazard Group 2 (OH2) per NFPA 13 Section 4.3.3.2 and A4.3.3.2. The bike room shall consist of 2-hour fire rated construction.

M. **Additional Requirements for 5- or 6-story buildings:**

1. Requirements for an Emergency Responder Communications Enhancement System (ERCES) shall be determined during Fire Department plan review.

2. The second means of egress shall be a non-combustible exterior exit stairway designed in accordance with CBC Section 1011 and 1027, with an exception allowed for fire separation distance per Section II.J.1 above. The exterior exit stairway shall provide access to the roof. The exterior exit stairway shall open to a yard or court that leads to the public way. Spiral stairway is not permitted for 5 or 6 story buildings.

3. Access to the public way shall be permitted to be through a non-combustible, 2-hour rated exit passageway complying with the additional requirements described above in Section II.G of this Information Sheet.

10/28/2026

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10/28/2026

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