

## MAINTAINING SAFE EGRESS

Egress paths in a building must be kept clear at all times in order to allow a safe evacuation in the event of any sudden emergency. New Zealand has clear restrictions on the storage of goods in certain places and requirements on clear paths, but much of this comes down to common sense. Owner's inspections must be undertaken and recorded to ensure these are checked.

When a building is constructed, the means of evacuating are carefully considered during the consent process. This includes the considering the numbers of exits available, the number of potential occupants, the distance they have to travel, and the fire safety precautions installed in the site. Exits are required to be well sign-posted and there are rules on the hardware installed on the doors.

Certain areas such as stairwells and corridors which are fire or smoke separated may have restrictions on the linings of the walls and floors. These are sanctuaries in a building where a fire can not be allowed to start, and no material can be stored in these areas. Wheelie bins and rubbish have to be kept out of these areas.

Paths throughout the building have to be kept clear of furniture and storage to allow clear access to the exits at all times. Consider that a path at least the width of the door must be kept through all areas at all times. Doors must be able to open to the full 90 degrees, and must be kept clear both inside and out. Chairs and tables must be kept clear also.

Someone must be responsible for ensuring goods in storage areas are not placed over an egress route, even temporarily. This can be a consistent problem, but education of staff and clear labelling of delivery and storage points will ensure that safe egress is maintained.

Bicycles are a serious danger in an exitway as they are extremely difficult to navigate when they fall over, as can easily occur in an emergency. These should be secured in racks and kept well out of egress paths.

Trip hazards should be eliminated and items such as power cords and extension leads should be hard-wired and safely re-routed. Walking over extension cables will cause damage to the insulation and can lead to short-circuiting.

Egress routes are required to be inspected daily in Crowd occupancies and monthly in all other buildings. Inspections must be recorded and kept on site – FFP are able to provide a manual if required to record these.

