

STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. I-11-02

May 24, 2002

The following is offered in response to your communication to me which was undated but received in this office on May 20, 2002, in which you seek a formal interpretation of the provisions of section 1024.1 of the BOCA National Building Code/1996 portion of the 1999 State Building Code.

Question: With exceptions, section 1024.1 of the BOCA National Building Code/1996 portion of the 1999 State Building Code requires artificial lighting in all means of egress. Does this requirement extend to all spaces within a building, or just to egress passageways, or to some combination of the above?

Answer: As you state within the question, the code section referenced requires artificial illumination in all portions of the means of egress, unless the occupancy meets one of the stated exceptions within the code language. Means of egress includes exit access, exit, and exit discharge. It is the intent of the code that all three portions of the means of egress be adequately lighted artificially to meet the requirements of the code. That having been said, one must apply some common sense to the code's requirements. Every space within a building that is neither an exit nor an exit discharge is in effect exit access, since one may have to traverse that space to gain access to an exit. It is, however, reasonable to assume that relatively small spaces such as closets, bathrooms and private offices with which the occupants are familiar are not required to have artificial means of egress lighting as long as the space or passageway they open onto has such lighting. In the event of an emergency, the occupant of such space could reasonably find their way to the door of the closet, bathroom or small office and get into the lighted passageway. Larger spaces such as multiple occupant offices and conference rooms would, on the other hand, be required to be equipped with artificial egress illumination.

All of the exit portions of the means of egress (stairs, ramps, horizontal exits, etc.) must be artificially lighted, as well as all of the exit discharge. Keep in mind that exit discharge is that portion of the means of egress from the exit to the public way. The public way may simply be a public space that is at least ten feet in width and height (see section 1002.0 of the referenced code for a definition of public way). Although the exit discharge must be artificially lighted, the code does not specify the location of such lighting. If the path of travel to the public way is within close proximity to the building it is possible that building mounted lights, or spill from lighting within the building could meet the requirements of section 1024.2, which sets the intensity of illumination requirements.