

NYC FIRE CODE GUIDE



CODE DEVELOPMENT UNIT
BUREAU OF FIRE PREVENTION

MAY 25, 2017

bulkheads; chimneys; hatches; plumbing ventilation pipes; scuttles; skylights; and roof-mounted heating, air conditioning equipment; and

4. The 6-foot rooftop clear path width required by **FC504.4** shall be provided and maintained across the rooftop in accordance with **FC504.4**, except that Qualifying Encroachments may encroach upon and reduce the width of such clear path up to 2 feet (24 inches). The Qualifying Encroachments are not limited in length or height, but shall not reduce the width of the clear path at any point to less than 4 feet (48 inches); and
5. The Qualifying Encroachments may not encroach upon the rooftop landing areas required by **FC504.4.3**, which shall be kept free of obstructions for the required six-foot by six-foot dimension; and
6. The rooftop solar panel installation is filed with the New York City Department of Buildings for full plan review in accordance with that agency's filing procedures (not under professional certification in lieu of plan review), or is filed with the Fire Department's Bureau of Fire Prevention for plan review in accordance with Fire Department filing procedures; and
7. The solar panel installation complies with all other Fire Code requirements, including all other requirements of **FC504.4**.

The Department of Buildings will approve a solar panel installation with Qualifying Encroachments in the clear path (and the Fire Department will approve a rooftop access plan with such encroachments) if the plan meets these guidelines.

An applicant seeking any other or further modification of the rooftop access and clear path requirements of **FC504.4**, or to authorize encroachment upon the clear path by any type of building feature not listed above as a Qualifying Encroachment, must file a modification application with the Fire Department in accordance with **FC104.8**. A modification application may be obtained using this link: <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/fdny/downloads/pdf/business/tm-5-plan-review-rooftop-access.pdf>.

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39. **I have read the Fire Department rules that implement FC505.3 and 505.4, which require that apartment buildings and hotels have room numbers, hallway directional signs, and "fire emergency markings" on entrance and stairwell doors. The requirements differ depending on whether the building is sprinklered and has more than 8 apartments or guest rooms on a floor, and whether any apartment or guest room has more than one entrance on one or more floors. Frankly, I find the requirements confusing. Could you provide a simple explanation?**

We will try to do so. The different standards for requiring installation of these new fire safety markings and signage resulted from compromises intended to minimize the burden of compliance. For example, it was agreed in drafting the 2014 Fire Code that building hallway directional signs, which are intended to speed a medical or other non-fire emergency response to a building, should not be required if the building has 8 or fewer apartments on a floor.

There are basically five (5) separate compliance obligations. They may be summarized as follows:

Apartment/guest room entrance door identification. These are "eye-level" markings on the main entrance door to each dwelling unit in the building hallway (public) corridor. They are required in all buildings, whether or not they are sprinklered and regardless of the number of units on the floor. See **FC505.3** and Fire Department rule 3 RCNY 505-01(c). Compliance is required by March 30, 2017.

Lobby and hallway corridor directional signs. These are "eye-level" markings. They are required in all buildings that have more than 8 dwelling units on a floor whether or not they are sprinklered. There is an exception if all of the apartments are located in a single direction from the elevator lobby or stairwell. See **FC505.3.2** and Fire Department rule 3 RCNY 505-01(d). Compliance is required by March 30, 2017.

Apartment/guest room entrance door fire emergency markings. These are “floor level” markings on the door jamb of each dwelling unit (on the inside of the door frame in the building hallway corridor, from 12 inches above the floor, downwards), which enable firefighters crawling on the floor during a fire or smoke condition to identify the apartment or room. They are required in buildings that are NOT protected throughout by a sprinkler system AND that have more than 8 dwelling units on a floor. See **FC505.4.2** and Fire Department rule 3 RCNY 505-02(d). Compliance is required by March 30, 2018.

Stairwell door fire emergency markings. These are “floor level” markings on the door jamb of stairwell entrance doors (on the inside of the door frame in the building hallway corridor, from 12 inches above the floor, downwards). They are required in buildings that are NOT protected throughout by a sprinkler system, regardless of the number of apartments on the floor. The markings are not required if the stairwell doors have photoluminescent path of egress markings in compliance with Building Code Section 1024.2.6.1. See **FC505.4.3** and Fire Department rule 3 RCNY 505-02(f). Compliance is required by March 30, 2018.

Multi-floor dwelling unit entrance door fire emergency markings. These are “floor level” markings on the door jamb (on the inside of the door frame in the building hallway corridor, from 12 inches above the floor, downwards). They are required for all “multi-floor dwelling units” (a term defined in FC502.1), regardless of whether the building is protected throughout by a sprinkler system and regardless of the number of dwelling units on the floor. See **FC505.4.1** and Fire Department rule 3 RCNY 505-02(e). Compliance is required by March 30, 2017.

These requirements have been summarized in the following table, which was developed by the Real Estate Board of New York for its members, and which is used here by permission:

**R 505-01 Apartment and Guest Room Identification and Directional Markings and Signs
(located on or adjacent to door at eye-level)**

	Sprinklered buildings with 8 or fewer units per floor				Non Sprinklered Buildings with 8 or fewer units per floor				Sprinklered buildings with 9 or more units per floor				Non Sprinklered buildings with 9 or more units per floor			
	Yes/No	Compliance Date	Photoluminescent or retroreflective Yes/No	Height	Yes/No	Compliance Date	Photoluminescent or retroreflective Yes/No	Height	Yes/No	Compliance Date	Photoluminescent or retroreflective Yes/No	Height	Yes/No	Compliance Date	Photoluminescent or retroreflective Yes/No	Height
Apartment main entrance identification ("apartment number")	Yes	3/30/2017	No	48" - 60"	Yes	3/30/2017	No	48" - 60"	Yes	3/30/2017	No	48" - 60"	Yes	3/30/2017	No	48" - 60"
Directional markings on wall at elevator lobby	No	NA	NA	NA	No	NA	NA	NA	Yes *	3/30/2017	No	48"- 60"	Yes *	3/30/2017	No	48"- 60"
Directional markings on wall opposite each stairwell entrance	No	NA	NA	NA	No	NA	NA	NA	Yes *	3/30/2017	No	48"- 60"	Yes *	3/30/2017	No	48"- 60"

* only required if apartments are not in a single direction from entry point

**R505-02 Apartment, Guest Room and Stairwell Fire Emergency Markings
(located on door jambs at floor level)**

Fire emergency markings for single-floor, single-entrance apartments	No	NA	NA	NA	No	NA	NA	NA	No	NA	NA	NA	Yes	3/30/2018	Yes	12" from floor, downwards
Fire emergency markings for single-floor apartments with multiple entrances on same floor	No	NA	NA	NA	No	NA	NA	NA	No	NA	NA	NA	Yes	3/30/2018	Yes	12" from floor, downwards
Fire emergency markings for multi-floor apartments (apartments with entrances on different floors)	Yes	3/30/2017	Yes	12" from floor, downwards	Yes	3/30/2017	Yes	12" from floor, downwards	Yes	3/30/2017	Yes	12" from floor, downwards	Yes	3/30/2017	Yes	12" from floor, downwards
Fire emergency marking on stairwell entrance door	No	NA	NA	NA	Yes**	3/30/2018	Yes	12" from floor, downwards	No	NA	NA	NA	Yes**	3/30/2018	Yes	12" from floor, downwards

** not required if building has Building Code-compliant photoluminescent exit path markings on stairwell entrance doors

40. **I understand that the Fire Code requires fire emergency markings only in unsprinklered buildings with more than 8 dwelling units on a floor. Some apartment buildings have floors of different sizes: some floors with more than 8 dwelling units and some with 8 or fewer. How do I comply with FC505.4 in these circumstances?**

The predominant floor layout in the building would determine whether compliance with **FC505.4** is required. If the majority of floors have more than 8 dwelling units, fire emergency markings would be required in the building on all floors, including those with 8 or fewer dwelling units. If the majority of floors in the building have 8 or fewer dwelling units, fire emergency markings would not be required in the building on any floors, including those with more than 8 dwelling units.

41. **I understand that the Fire Code requires fire emergency markings only in unsprinklered buildings. If the hallways of the building are sprinklered, but not the rest of the building, is the building exempt from the fire emergency marking requirement?**

No. FC505.4.2 excludes buildings “protected throughout by a sprinkler system.” As used in the Fire Code, this term refers to “fully sprinklered” buildings, not buildings with sprinklered hallways or other partial sprinkler systems.

42. **If I have multi-floor dwelling units, must I install fire emergency markings on non-multi-floor (single-floor) dwelling units at the same time?**

No, there are separate compliance deadlines. The deadline for installation of fire emergency markings on single-floor apartments is March 30, 2018.

The Fire Department prioritized the installation of multi-floor fire emergency markings with an earlier compliance deadline (March 30, 2017) because there are many fewer multi-floor dwelling units, but also because they are a significant enhancement of firefighter safety. Markings identifying a dwelling unit with more than one floor and indicating whether the floor is an upper or lower floor is a critical piece of information to a firefighter in a fire. Rising heat from a fire on a lower floor of a multi-floor apartment can make the upper floors of an apartment unsafe even for a firefighter in bunker gear.

43. **Fire Department rule 3 RCNY 505-02(d)(4) indicate that the numbers, letters and symbols of the fire emergency markings contrast with the background against which they are viewed. Is there any requirement with respect to whether the background is darker or lighter than the numbers, letters and symbols?**

No. The goal is to achieve maximum visibility and legibility under smoke conditions. Generally, retroreflective or photoluminescent markings should be visible regardless of whether the numbers, letters and symbols are lighter or darker than the contrasting background. The determination as to whether to make light numbers, letters and symbols against a dark background, or dark numbers, letters and symbols against a light background, should be determined by the owner, taking into consideration the overall entrance door or hallway color scheme.

44. Is there a required size for the apartment room number for the other floors on a multi-floor dwelling unit fire emergency marking? I am referring to the room numbers that appear horizontally above or below the upward or downward-pointing arrows.

No, there is no specific dimension for the room number on the upper or lower floor of a multi-floor dwelling unit, as shown on Figure B3 in Appendix B to Fire Department rule 3 RCNY 505-02.

The Fire Department did not specify a dimension for the upper or lower-floor room numbers because the space available for the room number may vary depending on the width and height of the marking.

As set forth in Fire Department rule 3 RCNY 505-02(d)(4), numbers should be made legible by applying established standards for stroke width, character height and character width, and contrasting background. A dimension should be selected for the room number of the dwelling unit(s) on other floors based on the overall size of the marking, but care should be taken to ensure that it is clearly legible.

45. The apartment buildings I manage have existing apartment room numbers and hallway signage. The apartment numbers are clearly legible but may be a little smaller than required by Fire Department rules. Also, some of the buildings previously installed reflective stickers with the apartment numbers on the bottom of the apartment entrance doors in the building hallways. The stickers are in good shape and are clearly visible to flashlight in low light conditions. However, they are not on the door jamb and not in the format required by FC505 and the rules. Do I need to replace all of these markings and signs?

Not necessarily. Fire Department rule 3 RCNY 505-01(b)(3) and 505-02(c)(3) allow owners to retain existing markings and signage if they are substantially similar to the markings and signage now required by the Fire Code and the rules. The Fire Department will accommodate pre-existing markings that adequately serve the purposes intended by these Fire Code requirements. Considerations include:

- Are pre-existing markings or signage clearly visible and legible?
- Are the pre-existing markings durably affixed and in good condition?
- Are pre-existing markings consistently applied throughout the building?
- Are the pre-existing markings applied or posted at a suitable location on or adjacent to the apartment or stairwell door, and/or in the building hallway corridors?
- Are pre-existing fire emergency markings adequately reflective or photoluminescent (or other material acceptable to the Fire Department)?
- Do the pre-existing fire emergency markings communicate substantially similar information as the markings required by the Fire Code?
- Is the format of the markings and any symbols used immediately understandable, without any prior familiarity?

If you believe that the pre-existing apartment identification and/or fire emergency markings are adequate, contact the Fire Department for guidance before replacing them. An initial inquiry can be made using the Public Inquiry ("Feedback/Comment") form on the Fire Department's website. Please include photographs, dimensions and all other relevant particulars. We will evaluate your submission and suggest an appropriate course of action.

46. **Fire Department rules require that apartment identification and fire emergency markings and signage be in place prior to occupancy of a newly-constructed building or occupancy. Will I need Fire Department approval of the installation in order to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy?**

No. Your design professional should certify compliance with **FC505.3** and **505.4** and 3 RCNY 505-01 and 505-02 in the required submissions to the New York City Department of Buildings, after confirming that the installation meets the applicable requirements of those Fire Code and Fire Department rule provisions.

If a subsequent Fire Department inspection of the building or occupancy reveals that the markings and signage are not compliant with the Fire Code and rules, a violation will be issued and the owner ordered to replace all non-compliant markings and signage.
