

R.I. Fire Codes Explanation

The Fire Safety Code directs enforcers to numerous different sources; essentially, it is a conglomeration of four (4) separate codes.

- a). The Rules and Regulations . which are amendments to b & c below
- b). The Uniform Fire Code, N.F.P.A. 1, 2003 edition, as amended (R.I.U.F.C.)
- c). The Life Safety Code, N.F.P.A. 101, 2003 edition, as amended (R.I.L.S.C.)
- d). The Fire Safety Code Board of Appeal and Review Blanket Variances and Code Interpretations . which further alter the requirements of a, b & c above

In certain cases, such as historical structures, the Rhode Island Rehabilitation Code may apply. (N.F.P.A. stands for National Fire Protection Association, a national set of codes adopted by many states across the country)

The Rhode Island Fire Alarm Code, which is part of the R.I.U.F.C, as amended, has been further modified. The most recent official Rhode Island Fire Alarm Code is contained in the Fire Safety Code

Board of Appeals interpretation #05-01 part 1 and part 2 (see www.FSC.ri.gov).

To determine what the law requires in a specific building, a person must first determine what type of use

the building contains within it. You find the descriptions in the R.I. Uniform Fire Code, Chapter 6, Classification of Occupancy. From there you would read the appropriate chapters in the Uniform Fire

Code and the Life Safety Code to determine the requirements of the code. Those chapters do not spell

everything out neatly; they refer back to general chapters in the same books or to other N.F.P.A. codes.

From there the next step is to check the Rules and Regulations and the variances/interpretations to be

sure nothing was amended for that particular requirement.

As an example, let's determine how many exits an existing restaurant with more than 50 patrons needs.

Turning to R.I. U.F.C. chapter 6 defines Classifications of Occupancy. A restaurant with over 50 people is

a Place of Assembly. Turning to R.I.L.S.C., you find that Chapter 13 covers existing Places of Assembly.

From there find the section stating how many exits are needed. Section 13.2.4 is titled Number of Exits

and it states *13.2.4.1 The number of exits shall be in accordance with Section 7.4, other than fenced*

outdoor assembly occupancies in accordance with 13.2.4.4, unless otherwise permitted by

13.2.4.2 or

13.2.4.3."

Now find chapter 7, section 7.4 to see what it states. **7.4 Number of Means of Egress.**

7.4.1 General.

7.4.1.1 The number of means of egress from any balcony, mezzanine, story, or portion thereof shall be

not less than two, except under one of the following conditions:

- (1) Where a single means of egress is permitted in Chapter 11 through Chapter 42**
- (2) Where a single means of egress is permitted for a mezzanine or balcony and the common path of travel limitations of Chapter 12 through Chapter 42 are met**

7.4.1.2 The number of means of egress from any story or portion thereof, other than for existing buildings

as permitted in Chapter 12 through Chapter 42, shall be as follows:

- (1) Occupant load more than 500 but not more than 1000 — not less than 3**
- (2) Occupant load more than 1000 — not less than 4”**

Therefore, there must be a minimum of two (2) ways out as long as there are less than 500 people

allowed in the building. It doesn't end there, first make sure no other provision in Chapter 13 allows for

only one (1) exit. Then you must read further in Chapter 7 because it is prohibited to have an exit through

a kitchen. **“7.5.2.1 Access to an exit shall not be through kitchens, storerooms other than as provided in**

Chapter 36 and Chapter 37, restrooms, workrooms, closets, bedrooms or similar spaces, or other rooms

or spaces subject to locking, unless passage through such rooms or spaces is permitted for the occupancy by Chapter 18, 19, 22, or 23.”

Restaurants generally have a kitchen with cooking devices. In Chapter 13, Section 3 contains information

on protection requirements for the kitchen appliances. **R.I.L.S.C. 13.3.2.2 Cooking Equipment. Cooking**

equipment shall be protected in accordance with 9.2.3, unless the cooking equipment is one of the

following types:

- (1) Outdoor equipment**
- (2) Portable equipment not flue connected**
- (3) Equipment used only for food warming**

Moving to chapter 9 it says **9.2.3 Commercial Cooking Equipment. Commercial cooking equipment shall**

be in accordance with NFPA 96, Standard for Ventilation Control and Fire Protection of Commercial

Cooking Operations, unless such installations are approved existing installations, which shall be permitted to be continued in service.

That sends you to an entirely new fire code, NFPA 96, which deals only with cooking operations.



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As has been shown, the fire codes in Rhode Island require intensive research to ensure they are properly applied to different types of buildings. Your local Fire Marshal will attempt to help you understand what is needed in your particular situation based on complete plans submitted and adequate supplemental information provided.