



South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation  
Division of Fire and Life Safety  
Office of State Fire Marshal  
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## Restricting Entrances at Retail Establishments in Response to COVID-19

In an effort to remain open to the public and promote social distancing, businesses are creating non-traditional paths of travel for entering and exiting their stores. State Fire provides the following guidance to building and fire code officials to assist in evaluating these new entrance and exit paths to ensure that proper emergency egress is maintained in accordance with the 2018 South Carolina Fire Code (SCFC).

- **Entry into a building may be restricted or prohibited at any time. However, egress from any required exit shall never be diminished, obstructed, restricted or prohibited.**
- **Physical barriers, such as shopping carts, shall not be arranged to prevent access to an exit or be placed in the exit discharge.**

**2018 SCFC 1031.2 Reliability.** *Required exit accesses, exits and exit discharges shall be continuously maintained free from obstructions or impediments to full instant use in the case of fire or other emergency where the building area served by the means of egress is occupied. An exit or exit passageway shall not be used for any purpose that interferes with a means of egress.*

**2018 SCFC 1031.3 Obstructions.** *A means of egress shall be free from obstructions that would prevent its use, including the accumulation of snow and ice.*

To prevent entry and to control normal egress, the automatic opening feature of automatic sliding doors may be turned off so as long as the door remains accessible, unlocked and available for use by manually opening the door with a force of 50lbs or less applied in the direction of egress. Additional signage on the interior of the door that indicates "Emergency Exit Only" is permitted.

To control the number of persons who enter the building, businesses may create queues on the exterior of the building so as long as the queues do not block the required exit discharge or interfere with the apparatus access roads. Materials that are easily broken and that do not create a trip hazard such a barrier tape may be used to direct patrons away from an entrance or into a queue at the discretion of the local building or fire code official.

The Office of State Fire Marshal has been in touch with major retailers in South Carolina to provide guidance about maintaining required egress in accordance with the SCFC. Though code enforcement at most retail occupancies is the responsibility of the local Authority Having Jurisdiction, the Office of State Fire Marshal remains ready to assist local jurisdictions if requested. For questions or assistance, please contact the [Deputy State Fire Marshal](#) in your area.

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