

## FIRE PROTECTION HISTORY-PART 268: 1918 (HORIZONTAL EXITS)

By Richard Schulte

The twenty-second Annual Meeting of the National Fire Protection Association was held in Chicago in May 1918. Among the reports presented at this meeting was the Report of Committee on Safety to Life. A portion of this report addressed the details of the horizontal exits. The following is an excerpt of the Report addressing horizontal exits:

### ***“Horizontal Exits.***

*22. In buildings erected after (date of enactment of rules), the term "horizontal exit" shall be understood to mean one or more openings through or around a fire wall, fire exit partition, or any wall separating two buildings; no such opening shall be less than 30 inches wide. Or such an exit may be an exterior bridge or balcony connecting two buildings or two floor areas of the same building. Where there is a difference in level between connected, buildings or floor areas, gradients shall be provided of not more than 1 foot in 6 feet where practicable. The bridges or balconies shall be not less than 44 inches wide, and shall be constructed of incombustible material, and enclosed on the sides at least 4 feet high. All exterior, exposing openings in connected buildings or floor areas within 10 feet of bridge or balcony shall be protected by fire doors or fire windows with fixed or automatic sash. The floor of a bridge or balcony shall be not more than 7[-]3/4 inches below the door sill opening upon it; the connecting floor within the building shall be not more than 1 inch below the sill. Every such bridge or balcony when enclosed shall be provided with means for lighting. (Section 46, Article 2 © National Board Building Code.)*

*23. In buildings erected prior to (date of enactment of rules), horizontal exits shall conform to the above rules, except that bridges or balconies may be 36 inches wide, and provided that, where the floors and enclosures are of solid material, no protection of exterior exposing openings shall be required.”*

The concept of the “horizontal exit” as an acceptable method of providing egress for building occupants during a fire was well developed in 1918.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Source:** *Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Annual [NFPA] Meeting*, Chicago, Illinois, 1918.

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Richard C. Schulte