

U.S. Fire Administration / National Fire Academy

Coffee Break Training

Topic: Verifying Means of Egress

Learning objective: The student shall be able to explain the importance of conducting fire inspections that include the building's exterior.

This photograph illustrates the age-old maxim, "Out of sight, out of mind." These rolling trash receptacles were emptied by the local waste-hauling firm, and left in the alley behind a five-story office building. Evidently the truck driver did not realize he had placed the receptacles across one of the building's emergency exits.



Since the building owner or occupants seldom used the alley adjacent to the building, who knows how long this condition existed? It is important that the fire inspector survey the outside of the building to identify potential problems and have them corrected.

All means of egress must lead without interruption to a public way. These trash receptacles must be moved so that they will not block essential means of egress.

Trash containers like these are a common fire problem through carelessness or vandalism. The containers' location near the natural gas meter also create a potential hazard in the event of a fire.

The fire inspector should work with the building owner and waste-hauling firm to find a suitable location for these receptacles.