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**Department of Permits, Licenses, and Inspections
Code Bulletin – Interpretation**

Applicable Code Section(s): 2009 IBC 1021.1, 1025	Interpretation#: IBC1021-11.29.2016
Subject: Horizontal Exits, Required number of Exits	BCO: Erik Harless Date: November 29, 2016

Question:

When more than two (2) exits are required from a story, based on occupant load in accordance with IBC 1021.1, does the introduction of a fire barrier with a horizontal exit between other required exits comply as an additional, independent exit from a story?

Interpretation:

Horizontal exits are recognized and are permitted to serve as exits in a means of egress system in accordance with the provisions and limitations of IBC Section 1025. For example, horizontal exits may be necessary to achieve access to an exit from spaces or rooms, or access to an exit within a limited travel distance.

In the context of the subject under review, however, IBC 1021.1 prescribes the number of approved, independent exits that must be available to each occupant of a story.

The use of a fire barrier with a horizontal exit, arranged such that occupants must pass through the horizontal exit in order to gain access to other required exits within the same story of the same building, does not provide an independent exit from that story. An occupant is clearly not exiting the story when passing through the horizontal exit alone, but is dependent upon the availability of other required exits on that story. The loss of any exit in this scenario results in the horizontal exit also being rendered ineffective as an alternate, independent path to exit discharge.

Horizontal exits arranged in this manner therefor will not be approved as an independent exit from a story in accordance with IBC 1021.1.