

Chapter Ind 55

THEATERS AND ASSEMBLY HALLS

Ind 55.001	Theaters	Ind 55.34	Fire extinguishers
Ind 55.01	Assembly halls	Ind 55.35	Automatic sprinklers
Ind 55.02	Class of construction	Ind 55.40	Motion picture machine booths, general
Ind 55.03	Height above grade	Ind 55.41	Construction of booth
Ind 55.04	Exposure and courts	Ind 55.42	Doors
Ind 55.05	Separation from other occupancies	Ind 55.43	Openings
Ind 55.06	Capacity	Ind 55.44	Ventilation of booths
Ind 55.07	Number and location of exits	Ind 55.45	Relief outlets
Ind 55.08	Type of exits	Ind 55.46	Electric wiring
Ind 55.09	Stairways	Ind 55.47	Motion picture machine
Ind 55.10	Exit doorways and doors	Ind 55.48	Fire protection in booth; care and use of film
Ind 55.11	Exit lights	Ind 55.49	Portable booths
Ind 55.12	Width of exits	Ind 55.50	Maintenance
Ind 55.13	Seating	Ind 55.51	Grandstands
Ind 55.14	Width of aisles	Ind 55.52	Exits
Ind 55.15	Lobbies and foyers	Ind 55.53	Aisles and passageways
Ind 55.16	Inclines and aisle steps	Ind 55.54	Seating
Ind 55.17	Obstruction	Ind 55.55	Guard rails
Ind 55.18	Mirrors and false openings	Ind 55.56	Portable grandstands or bleachers
Ind 55.19	Decorations	Ind 55.57	Inspection
Ind 55.20	Elevator and vent shafts	Ind 55.58	Tents
Ind 55.21	Stage separation	Ind 55.59	Structural requirements
Ind 55.22	Proscenium wall	Ind 55.60	Flame resistance
Ind 55.23	Proscenium curtain	Ind 55.61	Fire hazards
Ind 55.24	Automatic smoke outlet	Ind 55.62	Exits
Ind 55.25	Stage vestibules	Ind 55.63	Electrical installations
Ind 55.26	Footlight trough	Ind 55.64	Fire extinguishing equipment
Ind 55.27	Fireproof paint	Ind 55.65	Illumination; exit lights and signs
Ind 55.28	Stage accessory rooms	Ind 55.66	Boiler and furnace room
Ind 55.29	Boiler and furnace rooms	Ind 55.67	Toilet facilities
Ind 55.30	Lights and lighting	Ind 55.68	Outdoor theaters
Ind 55.32	Sanitary equipment		
Ind 55.33	Standpipes		

**Ind 55.001 Theaters.** In the theater classification, are included all buildings or parts of buildings, containing an assembly hall, having a stage which may be equipped with curtains or permanent or movable scenery, or which is otherwise adaptable to the showing of plays, operas, motion pictures or similar forms of entertainment.

**Ind 55.01 Assembly halls.** (1) In the assembly hall classification, are included all buildings, or parts of buildings, other than theaters, which will accommodate more than 100 persons for entertainment, recreation, instruction, worship or dining purposes.

(a) Every assembly hall which will accommodate not more than 100 persons shall conform to the requirements of Chapter 54, covering factories, office and mercantile buildings.

**Ind 55.02 Class of construction. Capacities.** (1) The capacities of buildings or parts of buildings in this classification for the various types of construction shall not exceed, and shall comply, with the following requirements:

Register, September, 1959, No. 45  
Building Code

*Am  
Reg  
Jan 1961  
eff  
2-1-61*

MAXIMUM CAPACITIES

Type of Construction	With Stage	Without Stage
Fire Resistive -----	No limit	No limit
Mill -----	750	1,500
Ordinary -----	500	1,000
Frame -----	300	750

(a) *Exception:* The fire protection for structural steel supporting the roof may be omitted in one-story buildings in this classification provided the roof and its supports are of incombustible or mill construction throughout.

(2) Frame construction. Where a building of this classification is erected of frame construction, the following restrictions shall apply:

(a) Not more than one story in height without a balcony, and with no basement except a heating and fuel room enclosed with 4-hour fire-resistive construction as specified in sections Ind 51.05 and Ind 51.06 with all interior openings protected as specified in section Ind 51.09.

(b) Located at least 20 feet from any other building or adjoining property line.

(c) Is not built in connection with a building used for any other purpose.

(d) Is provided with foundation walls and piers of masonry construction.

(e) Where motion picture booths are required, they shall be enclosed with 4-hour fire-resistive construction.

*Exception:* In places of worship, a full basement and a balcony seating not more than 30 persons may be provided.

(3) Balconies accommodating more than 100. In any theater or assembly hall, balconies which accommodate more than 100 persons shall be of fire-resistive construction as specified in section Ind 51.001.

**History:** 1-2-56; (1); (1) (a); (2); (2) (a); (2) (b); (2) (c); (2) (d); (2) (e); (2) (f); (3); am. Register, June, 1956; No. 6, eff. 7-1-56; am. (1) (a), Register, August, 1957, No. 20, eff. 9-1-57.

**Ind 55.03 Height above grade.** (1) **THEATERS.** The height of the sills of the principal entrance doors to any theater, as defined in section Ind 55.001, shall be not more than 18 inches above the outside grade at that point. The floor level at the highest row of seats on the main floor shall not be more than 6 feet above the outside grade at the main entrance; the floor level at the lowest row of seats on the main floor shall be not more than 6 feet below, or above, the grade at the nearest exit.

(2) **ASSEMBLY HALLS AND ROOF GARDENS ABOVE FIRST STORY.** Where assembly halls are provided above the first story, the following limitation of occupancy, type of construction and exit facilities shall apply:

Type of Construction	Maximum No. of Occupants	Height Above Grade
Fire-resistive -----	No limit	No limit*
Mill, or Ordinary -----	400	2nd story or 22 feet
Mill, or Ordinary -----	200	3rd story or 35 feet

\*One smokeproof stair tower from the level of the assembly hall leading directly to the exterior at street grade shall be provided for every 750 persons capacity, or fraction thereof. These stairways shall be at least 44 inches wide and shall be in addition to other required stairways in the building.

Register, September, 1959, No. 45  
Building Code

Am Reg June 1961 eff. 2-1-61

(3) **BASEMENT ASSEMBLY HALL.** An assembly hall may be placed in the basement of a fire-resistive building if the capacity does not exceed 2,500 persons or in the basement of a building of mill or ordinary construction if the capacity does not exceed 400 persons.

**History:** 1-2-56; r. and rec. Register, September, 1959, No. 45, eff. 10-1-59.

**Ind 55.04 Exposure and courts.** (1) Every theater or assembly hall which accommodates more than 600 persons shall have at least 3 walls abutting on streets, alleys, or open courts.

(2) The wall containing the main entrance to any theater or assembly hall shall abut on a street. The lobby or passageway leading from the main entrance doors to the foyer or auditorium shall be direct and unobstructed and of a minimum width equal to the sum of the widths of the main entrance doors. There shall be no openings from other occupancies to such a corridor or passageway.

(3) The width of every exit court shall be at least 6 feet for an occupancy not exceeding 500 persons, and shall be increased at the rate of one foot per each 500 persons additional. Every such court shall lead to a public thoroughfare, either directly, or through a passageway of equal width, not less than 8 feet high enclosed with unpierced 4-hour fire-resistive walls, ceiling and floor as specified in sections Ind 51.05 and Ind 51.06. The floor and ceiling shall be designed for a live load of not less than 150 pounds per square foot. No such court, or passageway shall be used for storage or any other purpose whatsoever.

**Ind 55.05 Separation from other occupancies.** (1) Every theater and assembly hall shall be separated from any other occupancy by an absolute occupancy separation as specified in section Ind 51.08, except that a special occupancy separation as specified in section Ind 51.08 may be used between an assembly hall accommodating not more than 750 persons and any other non-hazardous occupancy. Where a special occupancy separation is permitted in this order, a single fire-resistive door may be used for the protection of openings.

(2) For assembly halls of unlimited capacity located on upper floors of fire-resistive buildings which are served by elevators, the elevator openings may be permitted under the requirements for special occupancy separation specified in section Ind 51.08, but otherwise, absolute occupancy separation is required.

(3) No garage, chemical laboratory or other occupancy where flammable or explosive liquids or gases are used or stored shall be located in the same building with a theater or assembly hall.

**Ind 55.06 Capacity.** (1) The following table includes various types of occupancy within the scope of this section, together with the method to be used in determining the capacity.

(2) No greater number of persons than the number thus established shall be permitted in any theater or assembly hall.

Use or Occupancy	Basis of Capacity
(a) Arenas and Field Houses -----	4 sq. ft. per person. Use seated areas only.
(b) Assembly Halls, with stage -----	7 sq. ft. per person.
(c) Banquet Halls -----	10 sq. ft. per person.
(d) Churches (Auditoriums) -----	7 sq. ft. per person.

Register, September, 1959, No. 45  
Building Code

*All  
Reg  
Jan  
1961*

(e) Churches (Dining Rooms) -----	10 sq. ft. per person.
(f) Dance Halls -----	10 sq. ft. per person.
(g) Dining Rooms -----	10 sq. ft. per person.
(h) Gymnasiums -----	6 sq. ft. per person for seated space. 15 sq. ft. per person for unseated space.
(i) Lecture Halls -----	7 sq. ft. per person.
(j) Lodge Halls -----	6 sq. ft. per person for seated space. 15 sq. ft. per person for unseated space.
(k) School Auditoriums -----	7 sq. ft. per person.
(l) Skating Rinks -----	15 sq. ft. per person.
(m) Theaters -----	7 sq. ft. per person.
(n) Theater Lobbies -----	7 sq. ft. per person.

(3) The capacity of theaters and theater lobbies must be combined to determine the theater capacity.

**Ind 55.07 Number and location of exits.** (1) Every floor and balcony of a theater and assembly hall shall be provided with not less than 2 exits, placed as far apart as practicable and so located that if any exit is blocked, some other exit will still be available from every part.

*Exception:* In places of worship, only one exit will be required from a balcony seating not more than 30 persons.

(2) Where more than 600 persons are accommodated, there shall be at least 3 exits and where more than 1,000 persons are accommodated, there shall be at least 4 exits.

(3) Exits shall be distributed on all sides which adjoin streets, alleys or open courts.

**Ind 55.08 Type of exits.** (1) The required exits from any part of a theater or assembly hall shall be exit doorways, stairways or ramps.

(2) All exits to grade from a higher or lower level shall be stairways or approved ramps. In all theaters and in assembly halls having a capacity of more than 400 persons, where the exit rise is not more than 3 feet approved ramps shall be used. By approved ramp is meant an incline located inside the building and having a slope of not more than one foot of rise in 8 feet.

(3) Stairway exits shall be interior stairways, or smokeproof towers as specified in section Ind 51.17; except that "B" type fire escapes may be used as exits from balconies for not more than one-half the required exit width, if located against blank walls.

**Ind 55.09 Stairways.** (1) Every stairway in a theater or assembly hall, except stairways from the main floor to the first balcony, shall be enclosed as specified in sections Ind 51.17 and Ind 51.18. No closet or open space shall be placed under any stairway, platform or landing.

(2) Stairways and steps which have more than 3 risers shall have handrails on both sides.

(3) Every stairway used by the public in a theater or assembly hall, shall have a uniform rise of not more than 7½ inches and a uniform tread of not less than 10 inches, measuring from tread to tread and

*Am Reg  
Jan 1961*

from riser to riser. No winders shall be used and there shall be not less than 3 nor more than 16 risers in any run.

*Note:* See section Ind 51.16 for general stairway requirements.

**Ind 55.10 Exit doorways and doors.** (1) Every required single exit doorway shall contain a standard exit door as specified in section Ind 51.16. For double doors, with or without mullions, the width of each door may be reduced to 2 feet 6 inches.

(2) No single door or leaf of a double door, shall be more than 3 feet 6 inches wide, and no 2 doors shall be hinged together.

(3) No rolling, sliding or revolving door shall be counted as an exit from any theater or assembly hall, nor shall any such door be permitted where it would be liable to be used by the public as an exit.

(4) Sills at all exit doorways shall be level and flush with adjacent inside floors and ramps. Where an aisle or passageway leads to an exit from either side of the exit doorway there shall be a level floor space at the doorway subtending the width of the aisle and the doorway.

**Ind 55.11 Exit lights.** (1) In every theater and assembly hall, except church auditoriums, exit lights shall be provided immediately over all exit doorways, and in such other places as may be necessary to direct the occupants to exit doorways and to a street, alley or exit court. The installation of such exit lights shall comply in all respects with the provisions of the Wisconsin state electrical code.

(2) Every light over an exit doorway shall be a red illuminated sign bearing the word EXIT or OUT in plain letters not less than 5 inches in height.

(3) All exit lights shall remain lighted during each occupancy and until the occupants have left the building.

**Ind 55.12 Width of exits.** (1) The total width of exits from every theater and assembly hall, and from every part thereof, shall not be less than the following: Buildings of fire-resistive construction, 36 inches per 100 persons. Buildings of ordinary construction, 40 inches per 100 persons. Buildings of frame construction, 44 inches per 100 persons.

(2) In theaters, the width of the front entrance shall be not less than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the total required exit width.

**Ind 55.13 Seating.** (1) All seats, chairs and benches shall be placed not less than 32 inches back to back measured horizontally, except that for grandstands and bleachers without back rests this dimension may be reduced to 24 inches. For benches without arms, grandstand and bleacher seats, the seating capacity shall be established by allowing one sitting or seat to each 18 inches of length. (See section Ind 55.54).

(2) All seats, chairs and benches, except chairs in boxes or loggias, shall be securely fastened to the floor; or if the floor is level, the seats or chairs may be fastened together in groups of 4 or more. Loose chairs or seats shall not be used unless a special permit is secured from the industrial commission.

(3) There shall not be more than 12 seats in a row between aisles, nor more than 6 seats in a row which has an aisle on one side only, except that for grandstands and bleachers without back rests and with

*Am  
Reg  
Jan  
1961*

*Am Reg Jan 1961*

a railing along the front, these figures may be doubled. No aisles will be required for such grandstands or bleachers where the seats extend to the floor or ground without a railing along the front.

(4) No seat bench or platform on which seats are placed shall be more than 22 inches in height of riser.

(5) No seat bench, or other platform or floor area on which seats are placed, or the top seat of any bleachers shall be nearer the ceiling than 8 feet, nor nearer to the bottom of any truss or girder than 6 feet 4 inches.

(6) The requirements of this order do not apply to restaurants, dining or dance halls.

**Ind 55.14 Width of aisles.** (1) Aisles having seats on both sides shall not be less than 2 feet 10 inches wide at the beginning and shall increase in width toward the exits at the rate of  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch per foot of run; or the aisle may have a uniform width not less than the average width of the foregoing calculation. No wall aisle shall be less than 3 feet wide and no other straight aisle shall be less than 3 feet 6 inches wide.

(2) There shall be a cross aisle leading to each required side exit. Cross aisles shall not be less than 6 feet 8 inches back to back of adjacent rows of seats.

**Ind 55.15 Lobbies and foyers.** The width of lobbies and foyers shall be determined on the same basis as required for exits in section Ind 55.12, but shall in no case be less than 5 feet wide, and shall be so designed and apportioned as to prevent congestion and confusion. Lobbies and foyers which serve as means of egress shall be at least equal in combined width to the required width of the stairways, passageways, aisles or exit doorways leading to them.

**Ind 55.16 Inclines and aisle steps.** (1) To overcome any difference in level between courts, corridors, lobbies, passageways or aisles required, or used, in egress from a theater or an assembly hall, approved ramps as specified in section Ind 55.08 shall be employed where the difference in elevation does not exceed 3 feet, except that this requirement need not apply to balconies.

(2) Steps in balcony aisles shall extend the full width of the aisle and shall have a uniform rise and run as specified in section Ind 55.09. No handrails will be required.

**Ind 55.17 Obstruction.** (1) All lobbies, aisles, passageways and doorways shall be kept free from furniture, drapes, display equipment, merchandise, vending machines and other obstructions, and no person except an employe shall be allowed to stand in, or occupy, any of the aisles, passageways, corridors or lobbies during any performance or public gathering. Except that patrons may be allowed to wait in a lobby or similar space if such use does not encroach upon the required clear width of the exits. Such waiting shall be restricted to areas separated from the required exit ways by fixed railings not less than 42 inches high. In entrance lobbies only, the exit space may be divided by railings not less than 36 inches high set up in the direction of travel in an approved manner for the regulation of ingress and egress.

(2) A booth or counter for the sale of package merchandise may be placed in the lobby or foyer of a theater where there is sufficient