

MEANS OF EGRESS INSPECTIONS: TIPS FOR FIRE PROFESSIONALS

A recent State Fire Marshal's Office survey of 189 Texas nightclubs revealed widespread means of egress violations. With thousands of similar nightclubs, bars, and dancehalls throughout Texas, ensuring that each of them is operating safely can seem like a daunting task. The following are ways you can successfully launch a safety review of establishments in your own community and ensure that Texans "Have an Exit Strategy."

- 1. Identify and locate bars and other venues in your community where people gather on a regular basis.** The next step is to classify the risk level. How many people regularly gather there? A bar that holds 25 and a concert hall that holds 5,000 will pose different risks and will require varying levels of work.
- 2. Contact the owner or manager directly to arrange a walk-through of the property.** You need to reach the decision-makers who can actually make any needed changes. Keep in mind that afternoons or evenings are often the best time to meet with those in charge.
- 3. Emphasize to owners and managers that you are not there to "police" them, but to help them run a safe business.** It may be helpful to point out the financial as well as human cost of fires.

Important things to discuss with club management

- **Exits:** Are there a sufficient number of exits?
- **Doors:** Are they blocked or locked? Do the doors swing in the direction of travel?
- **Emergency lighting:** Does emergency lighting work?
- **Exit marking:** Are exits clearly marked?
- **Protection of hazards:** Is kitchen cooking protected?
- **Interior finish:** Are walls and ceiling finishes fire resistive? Are decorations fire resistive?
- **Detection and alarm:** If present, does it work?

