Remediation Interpretation Bulletin – 6.4.4 (Occupant Load Posting)

Scope
This interpretation addresses the application of section 6.4.4 in the Alliance Fire Safety and Structural Integrity Standard (version 1.1) for factories inspected by the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, its staff, and designated Qualified Assessment Firms and their employees.

Purpose
This interpretation distinguishes between 1) the use of the term “occupant load” to mean the assumed number of people for whom exits must be provided given the floor area and use of a building or portion thereof and 2) the term’s use when assessing existing buildings to describe the maximum number of people that may safely occupy a building or portion thereof.

Alliance Requirement
The occupant load shall be posted for every assembly and production floor in a facility in a conspicuous place near the main exit or access doorway for the space. (Section 6.4.4)

Background
QAFs and Alliance staff have been requiring factories to post signs on each floor indicating the number of people actually employed in the work area. Additionally, engineers have required that these numbers be updated near the beginning of each shift to indicate the number of people present.

Engineers indicate this interpretation facilitates effort to account for occupants during emergency evacuations so the status of persons may be reported to authorities, including the attending Fire Service and Civil Defense personnel when they arrive.

Discussion
As drafted, the requirement is intended to assist in identifying overcrowding that may impede evacuation in the event of an emergency. As such, the posted occupant load should reflect the number of people the exits provided can safely accommodate based on the number provided, their separation or remoteness, and the available clear width at the narrowest point in the evacuation path.

As noted in section 6.4.3, the number of people that may occupy a space may be higher than the number for which exits were provided based on the design calculation of occupant load based on the floor area factor (expressed in square feet per occupant) described in section 6.4.2.

When the capacity of exits is greater than the occupant load calculated in 6.4.2, the occupant load during occupancy may be INCREASED. If the capacity of exits is inadequate for the number of people present during occupancy, the occupant load must be DECREASED.

The posted occupant load required by section 6.4.4 is then the maximum number of people permitted to occupy the designated floor or area served by the exits. This number will not change unless the exits are modified.
Requirements for evacuation plans are addressed separately in section 13.3 of the Alliance Standard. These plans should be posted in the vicinity of the occupant load sign. The floor plans produced in accordance with 13.3.2 to illustrate preferred evacuation routes should include an indication of the number of people in each area served by exits on that floor. (These numbers should sum to the posted occupant load.)

Instructions
1. Verify the capacity of exits serving each floor or area based upon their number, location, and width at the narrowest point in the egress path.
2. Confirm the number of occupants posted on each sign in areas or floors used for assembly or production reflects the capacity of the exits serving that floor or area.
3. Ensure the total number of occupants in the area served by the exits does not exceed the capacity of those exits posted as the occupant load for that floor.
4. Ensure signs are of a permanent material with durable and legible printing in English and Bangla.
5. Verify that occupant load signs are visible and conspicuous to occupants approaching the main or primary exit from the floor or area.
6. Confirm that the occupant loads of areas indicated on the evacuation plan sum to the total posted as the occupant load for that floor.

Changes
1. Corrected reference to “Quality Assurance Firms” in Scope to read “Qualified Assessment Firms.”

Authority

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