

more than 1,000 should have four or more exits. The exits should be lit brightly, not blocked by furniture or curtains, and should be opened easily. They never should be locked or chained. Seating or exhibit arrangements should allow enough aisle space for quick evacuation. You should familiarize yourself with exits and escape routes. Make sure the hotel's floor plan is posted visibly, and walk the entire escape route. Hallways, exits and stairwells should be clear of obstructions. Stairs should have emergency lighting, and elevators should be marked clearly to prevent use in a fire.

After you check the escape route, ask the hotel staff to remove any furniture that is in the way. Also ask them to point out the location of automatic sprinklers and smoke detectors. Locate fire extinguishers in case of small wastepaper-basket fires, but call the fire department before trying to control even a small fire. Arrange to listen to the fire alarm

and find out who on the hotel staff is responsible for calling the fire department. If you spot a fire, though, contact the fire department first, and then alert the hotel switchboard on the house telephone.

Before your meeting, instruct attendees about alarms, escape routes, and general fire-safety procedures.

## The Best Protection

No matter what safety measures a hotel and its staff provide, the best protection in a fire emergency is an alert individual who knows what to do. **A**

*Thanks go to Don Bowman, district chief of the Chicago Fire Prevention Bureau, for pointing me to information on their website ([www.ci.chi.il.us/Fire/Prevention/HotelFire.html](http://www.ci.chi.il.us/Fire/Prevention/HotelFire.html)), which helped me assemble this article.—Ed.*

## Is Your Hotel Equipped To Protect You?

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends that you choose a hotel protected by both smoke alarms and a sprinkler system. That's good advice, unless you're a federal employee who travels. In that case, it's the law—PL 101-391, to be exact. Under this law (Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990), all federal employees who travel must stay in hotels or motels deemed fire-safe.

Public Law 101-391, which applies to all places of public accommodation, including properties where federally funded meetings and conferences are held, requires each room to have a hard-wired, single-station smoke detector (according to NFPA 72, National Fire Alarm Code). Each room also must have an automatic sprinkler (according to NFPA 13 or 13R). Properties three stories or higher are exempt from the sprinkler requirement.

The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) is charged with compiling, maintaining and publishing the National Master List of facilities that comply with the law. While the original target was federal employees, the USFA hopes the list will serve as a guideline for everyone who travels. To be put on the Master List, a property must meet specific criteria for certain fire-protection systems.



The list, which is extensive, can be found on the USFA website at [www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov). Users can search the list by property name or location. A printed copy of the list can be ordered on the website or by contacting the USFA at (301) 447-1000. If a property isn't on the list, however, it doesn't necessarily mean that it isn't fire-safe. It could mean that the facility hasn't applied to get on the list. Applications are available on the website. **A**

*If you're a government traveler who gets booked into a hotel or motel where any of the required protective measures are inadequate or not available, report it to your local Scheduled Airlines Ticket Offices (SATO). Never stay in a lodging site that is not up to code. Overseas travelers should be extra cautious because foreign hotels and motels are not held to the same standards.—Ed.*