

**OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS**

Statute, Rule or Standard Policy Interpretation: **Determination of a Story in Occupancies**

Title:	Fire Prevention and Safety
Part:	41 Ill. Adm. Code 100
Section Number:	100.7(b)
Section Title:	Modifications to the Life Safety Code
Policy Number:	11-FP-002

Purpose: This instruction provides for current policy and guidance to ensure uniform enforcement of the 2000 edition of the National Fire Protection Association’s Life Safety Code. Specifically, the policy identifies when a level below or above the level of exit discharge (“LED”) is to be considered a separate story and not the same level as the LED. This is apparent in multi-level homes (bi-level, tri-level, split-level, etc.) homes and is also encountered at other occupancy classifications (e.g., educational or assembly occupancies where it is a common design to include three or four steps up or down into various use areas in the building).

Scope: Statewide

Current Code: The Life Safety Code currently does not provide guidance in occupancies having multiple levels separated by a relatively short run of stairs (3, 4, 5, 6, etc.) should actually be viewed as a separate and distinct story in the occupancy or simply treated as inconsequential changes elevation that should be treated as part of the same story.

Enforcement Policy: In occupancies that contain multi-levels, the level on which entry and discharge to the occupancy is made (“LED”) can be combined with another level as long as the number of stair risers connecting the other level to the LED is less than 8. In occupancies containing both a lower and upper level from the LED, with each having less than 8 stair risers connecting that levels to the LED, one of the two levels may be combined with the LED and considered the same level as the LED. However, the other level that was not combined with the LED must meet the requirements set out in the Life Safety Code for either a story below or above the LED. Levels that are 8 or more stair risers above or below the LED must always be considered separate stories and cannot be combined to be part of the LED. Similarly, levels above and below the LED cannot both be combined to be considered one story if the total number of stair risers connecting the multiple levels is eight or greater.

Example: A tri-level home, where one enters the home via a front door into the living area (containing the living room, kitchen and dining area) having 5 or 6 stair risers down to a lower level and 5 or 6 stair risers up to an upper level. It would be incorrect to identify this scenario as a “three story building” (i.e., counting the lower level, the entry floor and the upper level each as a separate story). Rather, because there are less than 8 stair risers in total between the entry floor level and either the lower or the upper level, it would be legitimate to determine that the entrance floor level and either the upper or lower level constitute one story. The level not chosen would be considered the story above or below. It would NOT be legitimate to determine that the entire occupancy

presented only one level because there are more than 8 stair risers in total when combining the number of stairs from the lower level all the way to the upper level because 5 or 6 stair risers down plus 5 or 6 stair risers up equates to a total of 10 to 12 stair risers from the lower level to the upper level and thus these must be considered two separate stories in this scenario.

Any changes in elevation that is purely ornamental and do not actually function to provide access to other levels of the occupancy, such as sunken living rooms or steps in foyers, are not within the calculations of different stories.

Reason: To provide guidance and ensure the uniform enforcement of the 2000 edition of the National Fire Protection Association's Life Safety Code in occupancies having multiple levels separated by a relatively short run of stairs.

Effective Date: January 1, 2011