How to Use the Control Manual

Example: Your company is planning to remodel a building on mine property to house changes rooms, showers, toilet facilities, lunchroom and a couple of offices. The person in charge of the renovation calls and wants to know if there are any MSHA’s regulations concerning the number and size of exits that are required for escape in case of a fire.

Step #1: You know that such regulations, if there are any, will be found in 30 CFR 56/57 so you turn to Section 4 (blue tabs) of the Control Manual. The index is behind the “pink” card stock at the back of the section.

Step #2: In the index you can look up “Buildings” or “Exists”. Either listing will indicate that §56/57.4530 discusses exits for surface buildings.

Step #3: You find §.4530 on page 4 - 56/57 - 15. After reading the regulation you wonder what is meant by the phrase “in which persons work.” You also wonder how many a “sufficient number” of exits is. You notice the bullet in the margin with the letters “PPM” on it. This tells you that there is an interpretation of the regulation in the Program Policy Manual.
Step #4: You turn to the second tab in Section 4. It is the blue tab titled “Program Policy Manual, Metal and Nonmetal Mines”.

The table of contents on page 4 - PPM - i tells you that the interpretation of 56/57.4530 is found on page 16 of the Program Policy Manual for this section.

Step #5: You turn to page 16 (4 - PPM - 16) and find the policy which MSHA inspectors are to use in enforcing §56/57.4530. The policy expands the term “work” to “normally works” and lists exclusions. It gives a more in-depth definition of exists and explains that a single exit may meet the requirements of the standard. Lastly, it lists factors which should be considered when determining how many exits will be needed in your new building.

56/57.4530 Exits From Buildings or Structures
This standard requires that surface buildings or structures in which persons work shall have a sufficient number of exits to permit prompt escape in case of fire. The standard applies to buildings or structures where persons normally work.

Excluded from the requirements of this standard are those areas where persons work infrequently, e.g., change rooms, surge tunnels, toilet facilities, and cafeterias. “Exits” may be doorways, passageways, windows, or other openings that lead out of the building or structure. While the standard uses the word “exits”, a single exit may be acceptable where it permits the prompt escape of persons in case of fire.

When considering what constitutes sufficient exits, the following factors should be considered: (1) the size of the exit(s); (2) the height of the exit(s) from the ground; (3) the size of the building; (4) the number of persons who normally work in the area serviced by the exit(s); (5) the nature of the operations; (6) the presence of potential fire hazards; (7) the type of materials with which the building is constructed, e.g., wood, brick, block, stone, metal, concrete; and (8) the presence of fire suppression devices or the availability of fire extinguishers.

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Step #6: With this information you and the building designer will be able to make decisions about exits that will most efficiently utilize the existing building while providing maximum safety and compliance with MSHA regulations.