

Chapter Ind 55

THEATERS AND ASSEMBLY HALLS

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**Ind 55.001 Theaters.** In the theater classification, are included all buildings or parts of buildings, containing an assembly hall, having a stage which may be equipped with curtains or permanent or movable scenery, or which is otherwise adaptable to the showing of plays, operas, motion pictures or similar forms of entertainment.

**Ind 55.01 Assembly halls.** (1) In the assembly hall classification are included all buildings, or parts of buildings, other than theaters, which will accommodate more than 100 persons for entertainment, recreation, worship or dining purposes.

**Note:** For assembly areas in connection with schools and other places of instruction, refer to Wis. Adm. Code chapter Ind 56.

(a) Every assembly hall which will accommodate not more than 100 persons shall conform to the requirements of Wis. Adm. Code chapter Ind 54, covering factories, office and mercantile buildings.

**History:** 1-2-56; am. (1) (intro. par.), Register, March, 1972, No. 195, eff. 4-1-72.

Ind 55.02 Class of construction. (1) The capacities of buildings or parts of buildings in this classification for the various types of construction shall not exceed, and shall comply with, the following requirements:

#### MAXIMUM CAPACITIES

Type of Construction	With Stage	Without Stage
	No limit	No limit
Type No. 1 and No. 2 -----	750	1,500
Type No. 3 and No. 4 -----	500	1,000
Type No. 5 and No. 6 -----	300	750

(a) *Exception.* One-story buildings are permitted for unlimited capacities providing the following conditions are satisfied:

1. The class of construction requirements satisfy Type No. 3, 4 or 6.
2. There are no ground floors or basements.
3. The setback satisfies the requirements of Table 51.03-A for over 30 feet distance.

(2) Type No. 7 and No. 8 construction. (See Ind 51.03.) Where buildings of these classifications are erected of Type No. 7 or No. 8 construction, the following restrictions shall apply:

(a) Not more than one story in height without a balcony, and with no basement except a heating and fuel room enclosed with fire-resistive construction as specified in section Ind 55.29, with all interior openings protected with self-closing fire-resistive doors as specified in section Ind 51.047.

(b) Located at least 20 feet from any other building or adjoining property line.

(c) Is not built in connection with a building used for any other purpose.

(d) Is provided with foundation walls and piers of masonry construction.

(e) Where motion picture booths are required, they shall be enclosed with 2-hour fire-resistive construction.

*Exception:* In places of worship, a full basement and a balcony seating not more than 30 persons may be provided.

(3) Balconies accommodating more than 100. In any theater or assembly hall, balconies which accommodate more than 100 persons shall be of Type No. 1 or No. 2 construction as specified in section Ind 51.03.

**History:** 1-2-56; (1); (1) (a); (2); (2) (a); (2) (b); (2) (c); (2) (d); (2) (e); (2) (f); (3); am. Register, June, 1956, No. 6, eff. 7-1-56; am. (1) (a), Register, August, 1957, No. 20, eff. 9-1-57; am. Register, January, 1961, No. 61, eff. 2-1-61; am. (2) (a), Register, February, 1971, No. 132, eff. 7-1-71; r. and recr. (2) (a) eff. 8-1-71 and exp. 1-1-72; cr. (2) (a) eff. 1-1-72, Register, July, 1971, No. 187; r. and recr. (1), am. (2) intro. par., and (3), Register, June, 1972, No. 193, eff. 1-1-73; cr. (1) (a), Register, September, 1973, No. 213, eff. 10-1-73.

Ind 55.03 Height above grade. (1) THEATERS. The height of the sills of the principal entrance doors to any theater, as defined in section Ind 55.001, shall be not more than 18 inches above the outside grade at that point. The floor level at the highest row of seats on the main floor shall not be more than 6 feet above the outside grade at the main entrance; the floor level at the lowest row of seats on

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the main floor shall be not more than 6 feet below, or above, the grade at the nearest exit.

(2) ASSEMBLY HALLS AND ROOF GARDENS ABOVE FIRST STORY. Where assembly halls are provided above the first story, the following limitation of occupancy, type of construction and exit facilities shall apply:

Type of Construction	Maximum No. of Occupants	Height Above Grade
Type No. 1 and No. 2	No limit	See Ind 51.03†
Type No. 3 thru No. 6	400	2nd story
Type No. 3 thru No. 6	200	3rd and 4th story

† One smokeproof stair tower from the level of the assembly hall leading directly to the exterior at street grade shall be provided for every 750 persons capacity, or fraction thereof. These stairways shall be at least 44 inches wide and shall be in addition to other required stairways in the building.

(3) BASEMENT ASSEMBLY HALL. An assembly hall may be placed in the basement of a Type No. 1 or No. 2 building if the capacity does not exceed 2,500 persons, or in the basement of a building of Type No. 3 through No. 6 construction if the capacity does not exceed 400 persons.

**History:** 1-2-56; r. and recr. Register, September, 1959, No. 45, eff. 10-1-59; am. (2) and (3), Register, June, 1972, No. 198, eff. 1-1-73; am. (2), Register, September, 1973, No. 213, eff. 10-1-73.

**Ind 55.04 Exposure and courts.** (1) Every theater or assembly hall which accommodates more than 600 persons shall have at least 3 walls abutting on streets, alleys, or open courts.

(2) The wall containing the main entrance to any theater or assembly hall shall abut on a street. The lobby or passageway leading from the main entrance doors to the foyer or auditorium shall be direct and unobstructed and of a minimum width equal to the sum of the widths of the main entrance doors. There shall be no openings from other occupancies to such a corridor or passageway.

(3) The width of every exit court shall be at least 6 feet for an occupancy not exceeding 500 persons, and shall be increased at the rate of one foot per each 500 persons additional. Every such court shall lead to a public thoroughfare, either directly, or through a passageway of equal width, not less than 8 feet high enclosed with unpierced 4-hour fire-resistive walls, ceiling and floor as specified in section Ind 51.04. The floor and ceiling shall be designed for a live load of not less than 150 pounds per square foot. No such court, or passageway shall be used for storage or any other purpose whatsoever.

**History:** 1-2-56; am. (3), Register, February, 1971, No. 182, eff. 7-1-71; r. and recr. (3) eff. 8-1-71 and exp. 1-1-72; cr. (3) eff. 1-1-72, Register, July, 1971, No. 187.

**Ind 55.05 Separation from other occupancies.** (1) Every theater and assembly hall shall be separated from any other occupancy by an absolute occupancy separation as specified in section Ind 51.08, except that a special occupancy separation as specified in section Ind 51.08 may be used between an assembly hall accommodating not more than 750 persons and any other non-hazardous occupancy. Where a special

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occupancy separation is permitted in this section, a single fire-resistive door may be used for the protection of openings.

(2) For assembly halls of unlimited capacity located on upper floors of Type No. 1 and No. 2 buildings which are served by elevators, the elevator openings may be permitted under the requirements for special occupancy separation specified in section Ind 51.08, but otherwise absolute occupancy separation is required.

(3) Where a garage which is more than 500 square feet in area, chemical laboratory or other occupancy where flammable or explosive liquids or gases are used or stored is built in connection with a building used for a theater or assembly hall, it shall be separated therefrom by means of 4-hour fire-resistive walls and unpierced 4-hour fire-resistive floors above and below as specified in section Ind 51.04. All openings in the wall to adjoining parts of the building shall be protected by means of self-closing fire-resistive doors as specified in section Ind 51.047.

**History:** 1-2-56; am. Register, January, 1961, No. 61, eff. 2-1-61; am. (3), Register, February, 1971, No. 182, eff. 7-1-71; r. and recr. (3) eff. 8-1-71 and exp. 1-1-72; cr. (3) eff. 1-1-72, Register, July, 1971, No. 187; am. (2), Register, June, 1972, No. 198, eff. 1-1-73.

**Ind 55.06 Capacity.** (1) The following table includes various types of occupancy within the scope of this section, together with the method to be used in determining the capacity.

(2) No greater number of persons than the number thus established shall be permitted in any theater or assembly hall.

Use or Occupancy	Basis of Capacity
(a) Arenas and field houses -----	4 sq. ft. per person. Use seated areas only.
(b) Assembly halls, with stage -----	7 sq. ft. per person.
(c) Banquet halls -----	10 sq. ft. per person.
(d) Churches (auditoriums) -----	7 sq. ft. per person.
(e) Churches (dining rooms) -----	10 sq. ft. per person.
(f) Dance halls -----	10 sq. ft. per person.
(g) Dining rooms -----	10 sq. ft. per person.
(h) Gymnasiums -----	6 sq. ft. per person for seated space. 15 sq. ft. per person for unseated space.
(i) Lecture halls -----	7 sq. ft. per person.
(j) Lodge halls -----	6 sq. ft. per person for seated space. 15 sq. ft. per person for unseated space.
(k) Skating rinks -----	15 sq. ft. per person.
(l) Theaters -----	7 sq. ft. per person.
(m) Theater lobbies -----	7 sq. ft. per person.

(3) The capacity of theaters and theater lobbies must be combined to determine the theater capacity.

(4) (a) Every theater or assembly hall having movable seats shall display a sign stating the maximum number of persons permitted by code.

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1. The sign shall be placed in a conspicuous place at the main entrance to each theater or assembly hall.

2. The sign shall have the following wording: "Limit (Number) Persons." The maximum number of persons shall be determined by the capacity as permitted by subsection (2) and section Ind 55.12. The lettering shall be white on a dark background. The letters shall be not less than 1½ inches in height and the number shall be not less than 3 inches in height.

**History:** 1-2-56; or, (4) (a), Register, July, 1966, No. 127, eff. 8-1-66; r. (2) (k), renum. (2) (1) (m) (n) to be (k) (1) and (m), Register, September, 1973, No. 213, eff. 10-1-73.

**Ind 55.07 Number and location of exits.** (1) Every floor and balcony of a theater and assembly hall shall be provided with not less than 2 exits, placed as far apart as practicable and so located that if any exit is blocked, some other exit will still be available from every part.

*Exception:* In places of worship, only one exit will be required from a balcony seating not more than 30 persons.

(2) Where more than 600 persons are accommodated, there shall be at least 3 exits and where more than 1,000 persons are accommodated, there shall be at least 4 exits.

(3) Exits shall be distributed on all sides which adjoin streets, alleys or open courts.

**Ind 55.08 Type of exits.** (1) The required exits from any part of a theater or assembly hall shall be exit doorways, stairways or ramps.

(2) All exits to grade from a higher or lower level shall be stairways or approved ramps. In all theaters and in assembly halls having a capacity of more than 400 persons, where the exit rise is not more than 3 feet approved ramps shall be used. By approved ramp is meant an incline located inside the building and having a slope of not more than one foot of rise in 8 feet.

(3) Stairway exits shall be interior stairways, or smokeproof towers as specified in section Ind 51.17; except that "B" type fire escapes may be used as exits from balconies for not more than one-half the required exit width, if located against blank walls.

**Ind 55.09 Stairways.** (1) Every stairway in a theater or assembly hall shall be enclosed as specified in sections Ind 51.17 and 51.18 with the following exceptions:

(a) Stairways from the main floor to the first balcony need not be enclosed.

(b) Stairways from the basement to the first floor of a single story place of worship need not be enclosed if they lead directly to the exits.

(2) No storage closets shall be placed under any stairway, platform or landing. A room may be placed under a stairway or stair-landing of 2-hour fire-resistive construction or better provided such room does not have combustible material or hazardous equipment stored or operated therein. All such rooms shall have a ceiling height of not less than 7 feet and the door thereto shall be a self-closing solid flush type wood door 1¾ inches in thickness or better.

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(3) Stairways and steps which have more than 3 risers shall have handrails on both sides.

(4) Every stairway used by the public in a theater or assembly hall shall have a uniform rise of not more than 7½ inches and a uniform tread of not less than 10 inches, measuring from tread to tread and from riser to riser. No winders shall be used and there shall be not less than 3 nor more than 16 risers in any run.

**Note.** See section Ind 51.16 for general stairway requirements.

**History:** 1-2-56; am. Register, January, 1961, No. 61, eff. 2-1-61; r. and recr. Register, February, 1963, No. 146, eff. 3-1-63; am. (4), Register, February, 1971, No. 182, eff. 7-1-71.

**Ind 55.10 Exit doorways and doors.** (1) Every required single exit doorway shall contain a standard exit door as specified in section Ind 51.15. For double doors, with or without mullions, the width of each door may be reduced to 2 feet 6 inches.

(2) No single door or leaf of a double door, shall be more than 3 feet 6 inches wide, and no 2 doors shall be hinged together.

(3) No rolling, sliding or revolving door shall be counted as an exit from any theater or assembly hall, nor shall any such door be permitted where it would be liable to be used by the public as an exit.

(4) Sills at all exit doorways shall be level and flush with adjacent inside floors and ramps. Where an aisle or passageway leads to an exit from either side of the exit doorway there shall be a level floor space at the doorway subtending the width of the aisle and the doorway.

**Ind 55.11 Exit lights.** (1) In every theater and assembly hall, except church auditoriums, exit lights shall be provided immediately over all exit doorways, and in such other places as may be necessary to direct the occupants to exit doorways and to a street, alley or exit court. The installation of such exit lights shall comply in all respects with the provisions of the Wisconsin state electrical code.

(2) Every light over an exit doorway shall be a red illuminated sign bearing the word EXIT or OUT in plain letters not less than 5 inches in height.

(3) All exit lights shall remain lighted during each occupancy and until the occupants have left the building.

**Ind 55.12 Width of exits.** (1) The total width of exits from every theater and assembly hall, and from every part thereof, shall not be less than the following: buildings of Type No. 1 or No. 2 construction, 36 inches per 100 persons; buildings of Type No. 3 thru No. 6 construction, 40 inches per 100 persons; buildings of Type No. 7 or No. 8 construction, 44 inches per 100 persons.

(2) In theaters, the width of the front entrance shall be not less than ¼ of the total required exit width.

**History:** 1-2-56; am. (1), Register, June, 1972, No. 198, eff. 1-1-73.

**Ind 55.13 Seating.** (1) All seats, chairs and benches shall be placed not less than 32 inches back to back measured horizontally, except

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that for grandstands and bleachers without back rests this dimension may be reduced to 22 inches. For benches without arms, grandstands, and bleacher seats, the seating capacity shall be established by allowing one sitting or seat to each 18 inches of length. (See section Ind 55.54).

(2) All seats, chairs, and benches, except chairs in boxes or loggias, shall be securely fastened to the floor; or if the floor is level, the seats or chairs may be fastened together in groups of 3 or more.

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