

U.S. Fire Administration / National Fire Academy

*Coffee Break Training***Topic** Premise Identification

Learning objective: The student shall be able to specify the requirements for premises identification.

There's an old saying in the fire service, "We can't help you if we can't find you."

Many, many buildings, structures, and tenant spaces have been erected without adequate address numbers, or other identifying means to help emergency responders find them quickly.

To address this problem (no pun intended!) the model fire and building codes now require buildings to have approved address numbers, building numbers, or building identification placed where it is plainly legible and clearly visible from the street or road fronting the property.

This is such an important matter that the codes clearly specify that this requirement applies to new and existing buildings, so code officials can enforce the mandate retroactively.



This single-family dwelling has no identifiable address.

Address numbers of letters must contrast with their background, and be designed with Arabic numerals or alphabetic letters. The *International Fire Code*[®] also requires that numbers be at least four inches (102 mm) high with a minimum stroke width of 1/2 inch (12.7 mm) to enhance visibility at a distance. There is no requirement for the numbers or letters to be reflective.

Many building and fire jurisdictions have created their own specific address numbering schemes based on such factors as:

- building setback distances from roads;
- number of units or tenant spaces on a single property or in a single building;
- access road configuration into one or more building sites;
- ambient lighting conditions;
- dwelling or business units that are accessible only from the building interior; or
- access limitations such as security gates or fences.

Don't forget that an important part of addressing a building may include rear entry doors, especially in "strip malls" where all the rear access doors may look alike.

For additional information, see NFPA 1, *Uniform Fire Code*[™], Chapter 1; and *International Fire Code*[®], Chapter 5.