

**Montgomery County Fire Chief's Association
Recommended Practice 2007-4**

Subject: Building Side / Quadrant / Exposure Designation System

A. Purpose

This system has been established to uniformly identify particular building segments and exposures, which will allow companies to carry out these operating procedures in a coordinated manner

B. Procedures

1. Building Sides (Refer to Figure 1)

a. Side Alpha

- i. This is normally the front or main entrance / access to the building and usually the side bearing the building address
- ii. For buildings with an unusual configuration, side Alpha will be identified by the first arriving unit, utilizing a suitable landmark (Refer to Figure 2) such as the parking lot, swimming pool, boiler room, etc.

b. Side Bravo is the left side of the building when facing side Alpha

c. Side Charlie is the side opposite side Alpha

d. Side Delta is the right side of the building when facing side Alpha

2. Building Wings (Refer to Figure 2)

Where configuration is such that sides cannot be easily identified, the building will be broken down into wings (see attachment drawings). Side Alpha will be the identified utilizing landmark. The remaining sides shall be identified by clockwise rotation similar to the above.

3. Quadrants (Refer to Figure 1)

- a. The building interior shall be divided into quadrants A, B, C & D starting at the left front of side Alpha and moving in a clockwise rotation.
- b. The wings are to be broken down into quadrants when this will enhance safety and / or operations.
- c. Floor numbers will identify building levels (Refer to Figure 3)

4. Exposures

Corresponds to sides of building, i.e. building on side Bravo is exposure Bravo, etc.

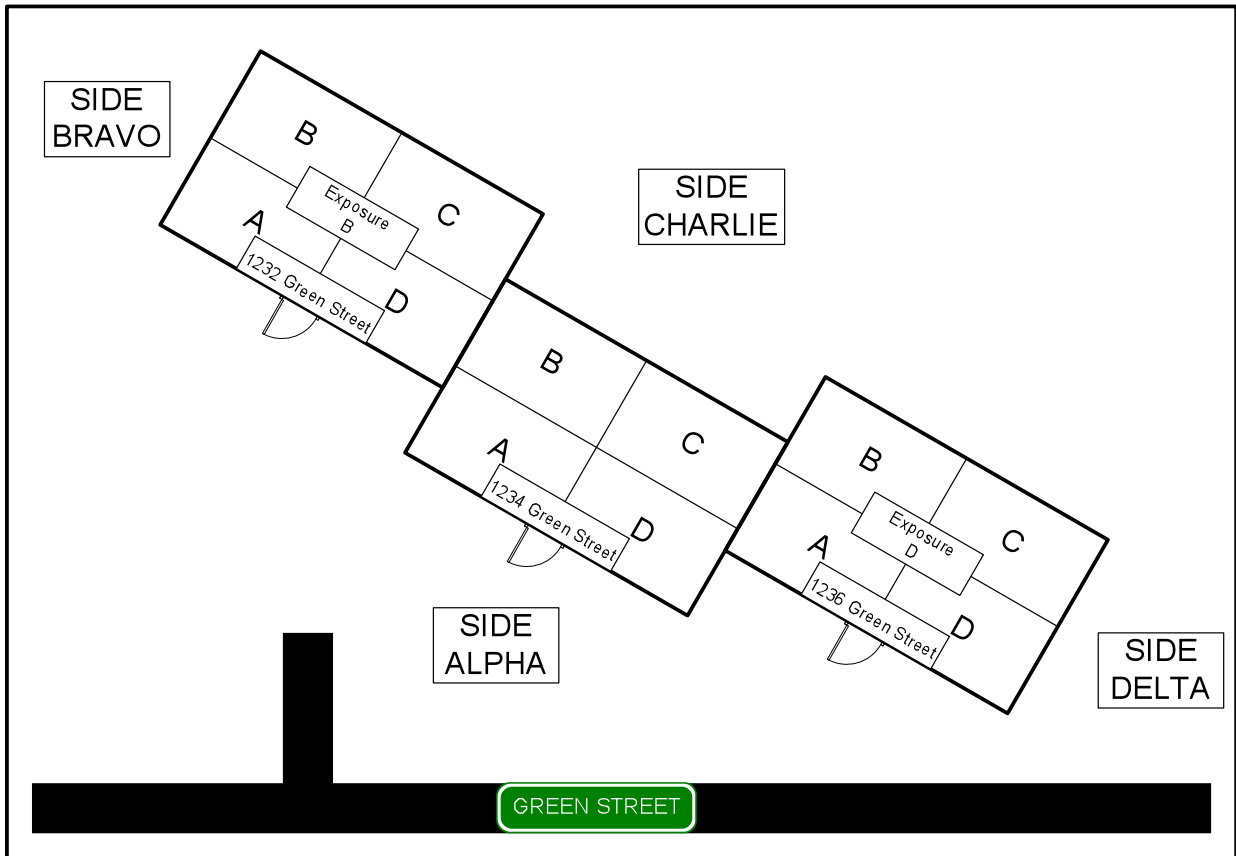


Figure 1: Side Alpha of the building shall be the side bearing the street address, or what is “normally considered the front” of the building. Sides Bravo, Charlie and Delta shall be determined by a clockwise rotation from Side Alpha. Exposures shall be designated by name, in the same manner as the sides. The building interior shall be divided into quadrants, (A, B, C & D), starting at the left front of Side Alpha and moving in a clockwise rotation. The levels shall be designated by floor number, and will be assigned as Divisions.

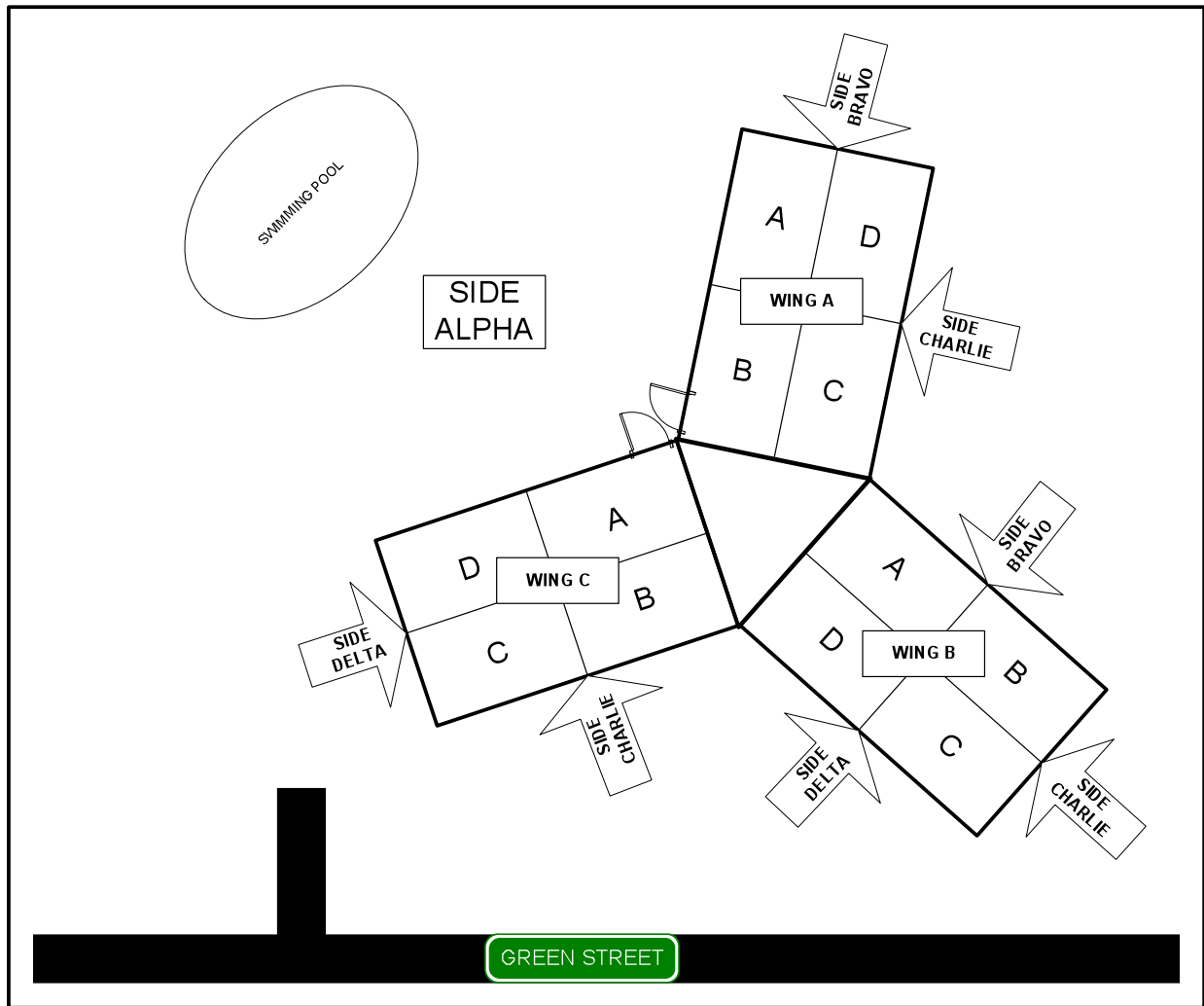


Figure 2: For buildings with an unusual configuration, side Alpha will be identified by the first arriving unit, utilizing a suitable landmark such as a swimming pool. Where configuration is such that sides cannot be easily identified, the building will be broken down into wings. Identify side Alpha utilizing an appropriate landmark and designate wings by clockwise rotation starting with Wing A. The building interior shall be divided into quadrants (A, B, C & D), starting at the left front of side Alpha and moving in a clockwise rotation. The levels shall be designated by floor number, and will be assigned Division.

5. Designation of Doors Numbers

Purpose: Emergency Services in Montgomery County have agreed that buildings side location should be standardized as described below. Many jurisdictions also have a program that encourages the labeling of exterior doors in the same standard fashion. This allows firefighters and other emergency responders to be aware of what side of a building they are on and approximately where on that side they are located. The side/door designation can also be utilized when giving reports and instructions, i.e. “Engine 20, best access to the fire is through Alpha 2”.

Method: One side of the building is always designated as Side A. Side A is usually the street side or the front of the building. Moving in a clockwise direction around the building the next side is side B, the next side, opposite of side A is side C and finally, side D.

All directions and orders given at the scene will be referenced to the sides of the building and/or the floor level, i.e. "Chief 20 on location. Side A is the Broad Street side. Ladder 20, force entry on the C and advise on conditions".

Often, the side designations, especially at large or complex structures, are determined ahead of time on Fire Dept Pre-Plans. Working with the building owner to mark the sides and door numbers prior to any emergency will help first responders be more effective and operate more safely. If the doors are to be marked, the following procedures are recommended:

- Facing side A, start with the door farthest on the right, and label that A1. Proceed in a clockwise direction and the next door would be A2, etc. This is repeated on each side of the building.
- Doors should be marked both on the inside and outside
- Letters and numbers should be large enough to be easily visible and in a color that is contrasting to the door color
- Do NOT mark overhead doors, only man doors
- Lobby doors leading directly to the exterior exit access should also be labeled
- Exterior doors that open into a completely segregated room should not be marked, i.e. door leading to fire pump room". That exception should be noted on pre-plan.
- Any site and evacuation plans should include reference to the doors by side and number.
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It is recommended that if you are considering using this marking system, the local fire department should be consulted.