



Putting People First

Office of Safety and Security Services

Charles Kearley, Director

19 Eaton Ave
Norwich, NY 13815

TEL: 607-337-7052
FAX: 607-337-7199
TTY: 866-933-4889

www.omr.state.ny.us

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF FIRE DRILL REPORTING

OVERVIEW

Fire drills and evacuation drills are required by OMRDD in certified settings for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, the safety of individuals that we serve is always the highest priority and fire safety is an essential safeguard. There are a number of specific regulatory requirements that relate to fire safety and the need for fire and evacuation drills at supervised settings such as Intermediate Care Facilities, Supervised CR's and IRA's, Private Schools, Day Treatment Programs, Day Habilitation Programs and Day Training Programs.

Fire and evacuation drills are specifically required in all setting that are certified using the Life Safety Code. The Life Safety Code, published by the National Fire Protection Association, provides a reasonable level of life safety, but it is only one component. Staff Action and proper planning for emergencies is crucial. In IRA's fire safety and fire drills are an integral part of the concept of Protective Oversight. Consumers who are enrolled in Medicaid Service Coordination must be regularly assessed regarding his or her capacity to evacuate, and the assessment must be performance based.

Fire drills and evacuation drills are also essential to ensure that all staff on all shifts are trained to perform their assigned tasks outlined in the facility's evacuation plan and to ensure that all staff on all shifts are familiar with the use of the facility's fire protection equipment. In addition, residents who are capable should be trained to participate and respond to fires or other emergency conditions.

Drills also serve to provide agencies with a mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of evacuation and disaster plans on an on-going basis and to capture information on changes in consumer status. Changes such as those resulting from advancing age, medical changes or new admissions may result in the need to modify the physical environment of the facility, revise the evacuation plan or provide additional staff resources to the facility to meet consumer needs.

Many consumers live in supportive settings such as 'supportive' CR's and IRA's not staffed 24 hours a day. In these type of settings there is an underlying presumption and requirement that consumers be self-preserving, which means that they are able to initiate and complete an evacuation of their home or other environments in which they spend time, in three minutes or less without any prompts or assistance.

Just as in the supervised settings described above, consumers who live in supportive settings must be assessed on an on-going basis to ensure that they maintain their self preservation capabilities. Changes in consumer status resulting form advancing age or medical changes may result in the need to modify the physical environment of the facility or may result in the need to reassess the viability of the consumer continuing to be able to live in the supportive setting.

In all settings, consumers should be aware of the facility's policies and procedures regarding the need to conduct fire and evacuation drills to the extent possible, so drills should not come as a surprise. Consumers should understand that their ability to demonstrate self preservation skills on an on-going basis is a requirement for

participation in the supportive housing program as well as being in their own best interest even though it may result in occasional personal inconvenience.

FIRE DRILL REPORT CONTENT AND FORMAT

The following outlines the most salient features of what is expected in a reasonably complete fire drill report. Remember that drills are only one component required for fire safety and must be coordinated closely with the actual fire evacuation plans which is discussed in detail in another section.

- Program participants and staff must be aware of the facility's policies and procedures regarding the need to conduct fire and evacuation drills.
- All facilities must have a written evacuation plan (discussed in greater detail in another section) and staff must be regularly trained in the implementation of the plan. In some Life Safety Code certified settings it is required that staff review the evacuation plan every two months. This is a proactive measure that facilities should extend to other settings.
- Drills should be conducted at varied times of the day and night and under circumstances which include; shift, time of day, day of the week, weather conditions, etc. The overnight shift drills at Life Safety Code homes should be conducted after the first half hour of sleep and during the first three hours of sleep. This is the period of time referenced in NFPA 101A, related to a consumer's ability to respond to an alarm during a period of sleep when he or she is most likely in the soundest sleep. Conducting drills during this period of sleep at other certified residential program types is strongly recommended, as it is the best way to gauge the consumer's ability to be awakened by an alarm.
- Fire drill scenarios should be based on a fire potentially starting in a variety of locations within the building, such as laundries, kitchens, mechanical rooms, garages, common living areas or an individual's bedroom. Staff and consumers should have an opportunity to participate and practice in a variety of scenarios since the location of a fire will influence which exit is used or the order in which various steps within the evacuation plan are implemented.
- The requirement for the frequency of fire drills varies depending on the type of facility in question and the specific regulatory requirements for that facility as well as the agency's policies and procedures. As a general guideline however, in supervised residential facilities a minimum frequency of one drill per shift per quarter is recommended. In day program a minimum frequency of one drill per quarter is recommended.
- All staff must participate in at least one full evacuation drill per year. This is a minimum requirement. It is expected that this minimum will be routinely exceeded.
- All fire and evacuation drills or events **MUST** be documented on a standardized form that provides all relevant information about the drill including, but not limited to:
 - Date
 - Time Started
 - Time monitoring entity or fire department notified of intent to conduct fire drill and system taken off line. (If applicable)
 - Time system reactivated
 - Verification that monitoring entity or fire department received alarm activated as part of drill
 - Time for last consumer to evacuate
 - Time for last consumer to reach the designated "safe" location
 - Time ended
 - Shift involved

- Method used to activate the alarm
 - Location of simulated fire event
 - Which exit(s) were used
 - Whether an alternate exit was utilized or there was a blocked exit. Exits that are never used are not considered exits.
 - Identification of consumers participating
 - Identification of the staff participating (Original Signatures)
 - Individual participant's response to the drill such as the type and level of prompts or supports needed as well as any resistance or impediments to evacuation
 - Any problems noted and corrective action taken
 - Administrative review and sign off of the completed report.
- Any Significantly problematic drills such as a circumstance where a consumer could not be evacuated due to refusal etc. should be addressed by the agency administrative staff within 24 hours. Actions taken may involve a repeat drill, consumer counseling etc.
 - The length of time a drill takes and whether or not that time is acceptable is dependent on the type of facility in question and whether or not the facility is certified using the Life Safety Code. The general rule for the public at large and for consumers in non-Life Safety Code certified setting is that evacuation will take three minutes or less.
 - If staff are going to observe a fire drill but are not going to participate, they should ensure that they do not inadvertently influence consumers by not evacuating with the group. Staff who are observing should try to position themselves so that they are not readily visible. Consumers should not be exposed to mixed messages during an evacuation drill.
 - Fire drills and evacuation drills should always be initiated using the facility's fire alarm system so that consumers and staff are fully familiar with the sound of the system and will immediately realize the significance of the situation and take appropriate action.
 - Once the fire alarm sounds staff should immediately react based on the training they have received regarding implementation of the evacuation plan as well as the principles inherent in the R.A.C.E system. Staff should not be trying to guess if this is a drill or a false alarm. If staff do not take the alarm seriously consumers will not take it seriously. Staff's only responsibility is to get everyone out (or, in certain limited circumstances, move people to a point of safety). Answering the phone, finding possessions or deciding whether or not to try using a fire extinguisher are all peripheral concerns.
 - Staff and consumers should remain outside the building in an evacuation drill until the all clear is given. Once outside, staff's main responsibility is to ensure that all consumers and other building occupants are accounted for and that they remain accounted for until the all clear signal is given. Consumers must be supervised to ensure that no one tries to reenter the home.

FIRE AND EVACUATION DRILLS IN SUPPORTIVE SETTINGS:

Many consumers live in supportive settings such as supportive CR's and non-24 hour staffed IRAs. In these types of settings there is an underlying presumption and requirement that consumers be self-preserving, which means that consumers are able to initiate and complete an evacuation of their home or other environments in which they spend time, in three minutes or less without any prompts or assistance.

- Consumers who live in supportive settings must be assessed on an on-going basis to ensure that they maintain their self preservation capabilities.

- Changes in consumer status resulting from advancing age or medical changes may result in the need to modify the physical environment of the facility or may result in the need to assess the viability of the consumer continuing to be able to live in the supportive setting.
- Conducting an unannounced evacuation drill in a supportive setting can be challenging due to the issues of access to the home's fire safety equipment and expectations of personal privacy. One method some agencies have developed involves the use of a cell phone. It is usually not practical to enter a consumer's home, especially during hours of sleep, in order to set off a smoke detector. Instead, staff station themselves in a location such as an apartment building's common corridor and then call the consumer on the phone. When the consumer answers the phone, staff announce that this is a fire drill and then observe the consumer's response.
- As in all other settings, the program participants should be aware of the facility's policies and procedures regarding the need to conduct fire and evacuations drills, so drills should not come as a surprise. Consumers should understand that their ability to demonstrate self preservation skills on an on-going basis is a requirement for participation in the supportive housing program as well as being in their own best interest even though it may result in occasional personal inconvenience.
- There is no specific frequency requirement for fire drills in supportive settings in applicable regulation but as in other settings, the assessment of consumers regarding their self evacuation capabilities should be performance based. A recommended best practice for fire drill frequency in a supportive setting is at least four drills per year with two drills conducted when the consumer is asleep.