



Putting People First

Office of Safety and Security Services

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Essential Elements of a Fire Evacuation Plan

OVERVIEW

While planning for every situation that may occur in any type of an emergency is impossible, being as prepared as possible is important. All fire plans must be "site-specific". Evacuation routes and meeting places will be different for each agency facility and these must be detailed in the plan. However, the following minimum elements are essential to all facility fire plans:

COMPONENTS OF ACCEPTABLE FIRE PLANS

1. The plan must detail the specific actions to be taken upon:
 - a) actual discovery of the fire;
 - b) smelling smoke; and/or
 - c) hearing the alarm
2. How to safely check and enter rooms during the evacuation process
3. How to evaluate evacuation priority
4. Individual staff responsibilities during the evacuation process
5. An identified meeting place for head count
6. Notification of the fire department

The night shift is normally the least staffed shift and also the one in which the residents are the most vulnerable should a real fire occur. The plan should, therefore, address this worst-case scenario while including other duties to be assigned to any additional staff available on the day or evening shifts.

1a. *Actions to be taken upon discovery of a fire*

- This is the most important aspect of the fire plan. Staff must react decisively, promptly and in the correct sequence to assure maximum safety when they encounter a real fire situation.

The RACE acronym can be used to reinforce the extremely important sequence of rescuing, closing the door, pulling the alarm and then evacuating the building.

R Rescue and Close the Door to the room of the fire origin.

A Alarm – pull the nearest alarm box (or if there is none, alert everyone by shouting fire or other predetermined signal.

C Confine the fire by closing all other doors while exiting.

E Evacuate the building by the closest exit and go to the designated meeting area.

1b. *Actions to be taken upon smelling smoke*

- If an individual smells smoke, he/she should immediately pull the nearest alarm box and begin evacuating the floor he/she is on while carefully checking doors to see if they are hot. Revert to **RACE** when the fire is actually found. The staff must then go to their assigned meeting area(s)

1c. *Actions to be taken when alarm sounds*

- Each staff person should have an assigned area to look after in the event an alarm rings. Night shift staff should be assigned responsibility for sleeping areas and/or particular floors.
- Staff may have several duties in addition to evacuating an area, (e.g. staying at the designated meeting place to ensure individuals do not wander back into the house and/or away from the residence, check the panel box to determine the location of the fire and direct critical assets to that location, contact the fire department from the building next door or the municipal pull box.) These duties should be specifically explained and assigned to staff when they report for duty.

2. How to safely enter rooms during the evacuation process

- All plans should have instructions on how to safely enter rooms during a fire emergency. It is important that staff is aware of the dangers of flash-over and how entering a room too quickly could be disastrous. The staff member should touch the door to determine if it is hot. If it is, staff should proceed to the adjacent room.

3. How to evaluate evacuation priority

- Plans should reflect consideration given to the specific needs of the individuals (e.g. cognition, motor skills, ability to follow directions,) as well as their location within the house, proximity to exits, etc.
- Many facilities have a panel box which gives them the capability to redirect staff from their initial assignments to respond most effectively to a given situation.

4. Individual staff responsibilities during an evacuation

- All plans must list the specific responsibilities of staff during the evacuation process. Staff should be given assignments by floor/area, rather than being assigned to specific residents, except when an individual requires two staff to evacuate or has been designated to have 1:1 staffing. All staff must know exactly what their job is when the alarm sounds and must be trained to react properly and quickly.

5. Identified site for the meeting place

- All plans should identify a specific location to gather after evacuating to determine if everyone evacuated safely. The “meeting place” should be at a safe distance from the building, avoiding roads, fire hydrants and areas to which rescue equipment/personnel may need access.

6. Notifying the fire department

- While some facilities do have a direct line to the local fire department or a central monitoring station, most have only a local alarm and, therefore, at some point the fire department must be notified. In most cases, notifications of fire department occur after all consumers have evacuated.