



# Emergency Planning and Preparedness

## Writing an Emergency Evacuation Plan

A thorough emergency plan will include the following components:

- The procedure for reporting emergencies
- The procedure for relocating and evacuating occupants
- Staff member duties during emergencies
- Floor plans identifying the locations of portable fire extinguishers, manual fire alarm pull stations and fire alarm control panels
- Floor plans identifying the primary and secondary routes of evacuation for each room or portion of the occupancy
- Floor plans indicating the locations of interior and exterior areas of refuge
- Site maps identifying the designated exterior assembly area for each evacuation route

Emergency plans should be submitted to West Metro Fire Rescue for review. Send them to the Life Safety Division. Plans may be faxed to (303) 969-8908 **or** e-mailed to: [codeenforcement@westmetrofire.org](mailto:codeenforcement@westmetrofire.org) **or** mailed Code Enforcement, West Metro Fire Rescue, 433 South Allison Parkway, Lakewood, Colorado 80226.

Emergency plans should be reviewed and updated annually. Additional reviews and updates shall be provided whenever changes are made in the occupancy or physical arrangement of the building. Revised plans should be submitted to the fire department for review.

## Developing an Evacuation Policy and Procedures

Your fire emergency evacuation plan should take into consideration the unique features of your building(s) and occupants. Develop an evacuation policy and procedures specific to your location.

- Determine the conditions under which an evacuation would be necessary.
- Establish a clear chain of command.
- Identify personnel with the authority to order an evacuation.
- Designate "Fire Wardens" to assist others in an evacuation and to account for personnel.
- Establish specific evacuation procedures.
- Establish a system for accounting for personnel.
- Establish a system for assisting persons with disabilities and those who do not speak English.
- Post evacuation procedures.

## Getting Started with Writing Your Plan

**1. Survey the building.** Determine what types of fire and life safety systems you have: voice alarms, smoke alarms, sprinkler systems, manual pull alarms, fire extinguishers and fire doors. If your alarm system is monitored, keep the name and phone number of the monitoring company available at the fire alarm panel.

Identify the locations of the following:

- Exits
- Primary evacuation routes
- Secondary evacuation routes
- Accessible egress routes
- Areas of refuge
- Manual fire alarm boxes
- Portable fire extinguishers
- Occupant-use hose stations
- Fire alarm annunciators and controls

**2. Survey the occupants.** Note any special needs that individuals may have, such as physical disabilities or not speaking/reading English.

**3. Create a floorplan.** Prepare a basic floorplan for each floor of the building. Show the primary and secondary fire exits as well as the locations of all fire extinguishers and manual alarm pull stations. Post the floorplan throughout the building. Mark "YOU ARE HERE" according to the location of the posted plan. Then mark the two closest fire exits. Also, note that elevators must NOT be used as a fire exit.

**4. Write a plan that clearly describes the building's safety system and instructs occupants what to do in the event of fire.** Describe the type of fire detection system that is located in the building. Explain where smoke alarms, sprinkler systems and manual pull alarms are located. Assign roles or jobs to building occupants and state what occupants should do if fire strikes.

Clearly describe the following procedures:

- Sound the fire alarm – notify occupants of fire.
- Call the fire department from a safe place. It may be necessary to evacuate the building first, before calling 911.
- Close doors around the fire to contain it.
- Evacuate the area where fire is located. It may be necessary to take refuge in a safe area inside the building, rather than leaving the building.
- If possible, assist evacuating individuals with disabilities or other needs.
- Once out of the building, go directly to the pre-determined meeting place and check in with the Accountability Monitor (the person responsible for making sure all of the occupants are accounted for in the meeting place).
- Report any missing occupants to the Accountability Monitor.

- Once out of the building, stay out until directed by the fire department that it is safe to return to the building.

Review the evacuation plan with building occupants. Assign specific jobs to certain occupants (including alternates to act in their absence) and practice evacuation drills with occupants regularly.

## **Sample Emergency Job Descriptions**

### **Building Fire Marshal** (and alternate)

- Responsible (with the cooperation of the safety committee) for organizing the fire emergency evacuation plan.
- Advises all occupants how to use the fire alarm systems and emergency communication systems.
- Conducts regular inspections of basements, closets and storage areas to prevent and remove any fire dangers.
- Regularly inspects the building's fire safety equipment, initiating any building repairs needed to ensure a safe evacuation.
- In a fire emergency, establishes a command center through which all information is channeled until the arrival of the fire department.

### **Emergency Coordinator** (and alternate)

- Selects, trains and organizes the staff for conducting emergency operations.
- Acts as liaison between the fire department and building occupants.

### **Floor Warden**

- Coordinates all emergency actions in an assigned area.
- Ensures that the fire department is made aware of emergency conditions (through the emergency coordinator).
- Conducts occupant searches and reports results to the command center.

### **Stairwell Monitor**

- Determines if stairs are a safe means of egress during a fire emergency.
- Holds the stairway door open and directs orderly evacuation of building occupants.
- Makes sure all stairwell doors are CLOSED and NOT HELD OPEN when they are not actually being used for egress.

### **Elevator Monitor**

- Ensures that the building occupants do NOT wait for or use elevators during an evacuation.
- Directs all people to the nearest available stairway

### **Restroom Monitor**

- Clears all persons from the restrooms

### **Monitor for Individuals with Disabilities**

- Coordinates the evacuation of any building occupants who have disabilities.
- Prior to an emergency, this person assigns TWO monitors to assist each building occupant who has a disability. During an emergency the two monitors will accompany the person with a disability to the reassembly area.
- If problems occur, this monitor reports directly to the emergency coordinator.

### **Accountability Monitor**

- Responsible for making sure all of the building occupants are accounted for at the reassembly area.

- Reports anyone missing to the emergency coordinator, who will advise firefighters. **ONLY firefighters should conduct a search for missing persons.**

## Practice Evacuation Drills Regularly

A fire emergency calls for fast decisions followed by fast action. It is unlikely that persons responding to a real emergency can learn something new during an emergency (for example, figuring out a secondary escape route). Planning and practice help evacuations run smoothly and help occupants remain calm. It is best to practice fire drills regularly and work out any problems with an escape plan before a real emergency occurs.

- Conduct fire drills regularly – at least 2-4 times per year.
- Consider inviting the fire department to witness one of your evacuation drills. With proper notice (4 weeks advance notice), West Metro Fire Rescue will witness an evacuation drill once per year for any business in the West Metro Fire Protection District. Call (303) 989-4307 to schedule an evacuation drill witness.
- Notify your alarm company regarding your scheduled evacuation drill
- Gradually increase the practicality of your evacuation drills by:
  - Conducting some of the drills unannounced
  - Putting up a pretend barrier (picture of a flame, sign with the words "EXIT BLOCKED BY SMOKE", etc...) by the primary escape route, causing occupants to become familiar with secondary escape routes.
  - Place a cardboard box decorated with pictures of flames to demonstrate the location of a fire. Evaluate how occupants respond to the location of a fire.
- Critique every fire drill, looking for ways to improve. Evaluate behavior, time and procedures.

### Sample Evaluation Form:

Date of evacuation drill: _____ Time of evacuation drill: _____			
Completed by (name and title): _____			
Personnel who participated in drill:			
Was an alarm sounded for the drill?                      Yes      No			
Which areas of the facility were affected? _____			
Was an evacuation of these areas completed?      Yes      No			
If no, explain why:			
.....			
<b>Rate the effectiveness of the drill:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
1. Personnel response	Good	Fair	Poor
2. Occupant, visitor, guest response	Good	Fair	Poor
3. Personnel familiarization with duties	Good	Fair	Poor
4. Effectiveness of procedures	Good	Fair	Poor
5. Speed of evacuation	Good	Fair	Poor
6. Communication during drill	Good	Fair	Poor
7. Personnel's familiarity of alarm systems	Good	Fair	Poor

## **Standard Procedures for Emergencies**

### **How to Respond to an Alarm**

- Treat every alarm as an emergency.
- Begin evacuation procedures.
- Notify West Metro Fire Rescue by calling 911 or (303) 969-0245.
- Determine the location of the fire.
- Proceed to your designated meeting place and report to the Accountability Monitor.

### **How to Report a Fire**

- Pull the fire alarm system.
- Call the fire department immediately *from a safe place*. Dial 911. If there are problems with the 911 system, dial (303) 969-0245 to directly reach the West Metro Fire Rescue Dispatch Center.
- Be prepared to describe the nature of the emergency.
- The dispatcher will ask you for your address. Be sure to know the address of the building. It is a good idea to display address and information on the telephone (on a sticker), so everyone has quick access to it.
- Be specific if there is a room number and a floor – provide all necessary information regarding the location of the fire. If your building has a name, give that name to the dispatcher.
- You will be asked for the nearest cross streets. Be familiar with the cross streets and landmarks.
- Provide as much specific information as you can on the extent and nature of the fire.
- Give a call back telephone number to the dispatcher.
- The dispatcher will confirm that you are in a safe location away from the fire, and may ask you to stay on the line until the fire department arrives.

### **Meeting place and accountability**

- Have a pre-determined meeting place where occupants will meet upon evacuation of the building and check in with the Accountability Monitor.
- This location should be far away enough from the building to be safe from debris and burning material. The location should be out of the way of arriving fire department vehicles and apparatus. Select an alternate location in a sheltered location, in the event of inclement weather.
- Once assembled at the meeting place, occupants should stay together at this location.
- Missing persons should be reported to the fire department by the Accountability Monitor.

**What to do if you are trapped**

- Put as much distance as possible (and closed doors) between you and the fire. Feel doors with the back of your hand before opening them. If they are warm, leave them closed.
- If there is a phone in the room, call 911 and report your location.
- Use towels or clothing to block openings around the doors and vents where smoke might enter. Put a wet cloth over your mouth or nose.
- Stay low on the floor to breathe the best air.
- Hang a blanket, towel, clothing or a sign in a window to identify your location for firefighters. It is advisable not to open or break windows, as oxygen may fuel the fire and smoke may enter through open windows and hamper rescue efforts.

**Important telephone numbers to note:**

To report a fire or medical emergency	911
JeffCom Dispatch Communications Center	303-980-7300
Douglas County Sheriff Dispatch Center	303-660-7500

To schedule CPR or First Aid training, you may contact The American Red Cross, The American Heart Association or local independent CPR instructors.

If you have questions regarding evacuation planning or to learn about fire safety training for your employees, please call West Metro Fire Rescue's Community Education Specialist at (303) 989-4307, ext. 537.