



CELEBRATING
100 YEARS
OF SAFETY

5-minute safety talk

Building Evacuation

A variety of emergencies may require your facility to be evacuated, including fires, explosions, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, toxic material releases, radiological and biological accidents, civil disturbances, and workplace violence. Your evacuation plan must be flexible so you can respond to different types of emergencies.

Evacuation planning

An immediate evacuation of your facility may be necessary, or an evacuation could involve your entire community and take place over a period of days.

To develop your evacuation policy and procedure:

- 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 “evacuation wardens” to help others move to safety and account for facility occupants — usually one evacuation warden for every twenty occupants.
- Establish specific evacuation procedures for your facility. Establish a system to account for occupants. Consider occupants’ transportation needs for community-wide evacuations.
- Establish procedures for assisting people with disabilities and those who do not speak English.
- Post evacuation procedures.
- Designate facility personnel to continue or shut down critical operations while an evacuation is underway. They must be capable of recognizing when to abandon the operation and evacuate themselves.
- Coordinate your evacuation plans with your local emergency management office.

Evacuation routes and exits

Designate facility evacuation routes, alternate evacuation routes, and exits. Make sure they are clearly marked and well lit.

Install emergency lighting in case a power outage occurs during an evacuation.

Make sure that facility evacuation routes and emergency exits are:

- Wide enough to accommodate the number of evacuating occupants
- Clear and unobstructed at all times
- Unlikely to expose evacuating occupants to additional hazards

Have your evacuation routes independently evaluated by someone who is not familiar with your facility.

Assembly areas and accountability

Obtaining an accurate head count after an evacuation requires planning and practice.

- Designate assembly areas where people should gather after evacuating.
- Take a head count after the evacuation. The names and last known locations of people not accounted for should be determined and given to your Emergency Operations Center (confusion in assembly areas can lead to unnecessary and dangerous search and rescue operations).
- Establish a way to account for visitors, such as contractors, to your facility.
- Establish procedures for further evacuation in case the incident expands. This may consist of sending people home by normal means or providing them with transportation to an off-site location.

Training and information

Train the occupants of your facility in evacuation procedures. Regular drills ensure that those participating know, in advance, what to do in the event of an emergency.

Conduct training at least annually or when:

- There are new occupants
- Evacuation wardens and other people with special assignments are designated
- New equipment, materials, or processes are introduced in your facility
- Your evacuation procedures are revised
- Exercises show that your evacuation performance needs improvement

Provide emergency information such as checklists and evacuation maps, post evacuation maps in strategic locations of your facility, and consider the information needs of visitors to your facility.

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