



High-Rise Buildings: Issues of Safety and Security

High-rises present a unique set of challenges regarding safety and security. However, many potentially dangerous situations can be averted and/or controlled by those who operate, live, and work in these structures. The following are some basic guidelines to help you safeguard your life and your property:

Building Occupants

Security...

- Read all safety and security information provided by your employer and/or building management. Know the name and phone numbers of security and management contacts. Keep them near your telephone.
- Wear ID badges, if required. Keep keys, pass cards, and code numbers in a safe place. Don't lend them to others. Be selective about who you let into the building or enter secure areas - meet expected visitors in the lobby and personally escort them to their destination.
- Be alert in high-risk areas, including parking ramps, garages, rest rooms, and elevators. Be observant regarding unescorted strangers, suspicious packages, or suspected signs of tampering with locks, ceiling tiles, or light panels. Notify security or management of suspicious activity.
- Establish a prearranged "danger signal" with co-workers or family.
- Keep your work and living areas orderly. Neatness helps you identify new or missing objects.
- In a residential high-rise, notify security or management of any vacation plans. Let them know about anyone you've authorized to come into your home or apartment while you're away (i.e., pet sitter, etc.). Leave a number where you can be reached in the event of an emergency.

Fire or Other Emergencies...

- Learn your building's approved emergency evacuation/relocation plan. If the plan has not been made readily available, request that management post and distribute the information to all building occupants and visitors. If you have a disability that may hinder your escape, let management know. Be sure there is a plan established to assist you.
- Know your building's emergency reporting procedures. Post emergency numbers near all telephones.
- Know the location of fire extinguishers and pull alarms (if applicable) and how to use them.
- Understand the various levels of alarms in your building and the proper response for each. Know the layout of your floor and location of all stair exits, both primary and secondary routes - never use an elevator in a fire or similar emergency. Know the established meeting place for an evacuation or relocation. Return to your work or living area only when advised by proper authorities.
- Participate in all drills and take them seriously. Discuss and practice them with family and/or co-workers.
- Know who's responsible for maintaining your building's safety systems. Report any signs of damage or malfunction, or if you see anything blocking these devices. Also report fire or other hazards (i.e. blocked exits, piles of trash, unmarked stairwells, open or locked fire doors, flammable or combustible materials or debris, etc.)
- In a residential structure, make sure at least one smoke alarm is installed on every floor of your home or apartment and in or near every sleeping area. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) suggests testing smoke alarms at least once a month, by using the alarms' "test button" or an approved smoke substitute, and clean the units in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Install new batteries at least once a year. Replace smoke alarms every 10 years.



Management

Security...

- Evaluate areas in and around the building to identify security risks. Develop and implement appropriate security plans and control systems, addressing issues such as:
 - Facility design; barriers and locking systems; safes, vaults, and secure storage areas; access-control systems; closed-circuit television surveillance; protective lighting; communication systems; parking; and traffic control.
 - Protection of property; proprietary information; forgery, fraud and theft; personnel screening; alcohol and drug abuse; employee awareness; management of the security force; investigations; reports; and loss analysis.
 - Disaster response and recovery; workplace violence; arson, sabotage and bomb threats; terrorism and kidnapping, ransom and extortion; civil unrest; strikes, and labor disturbances.
- Inform all building occupants and visitors about plans and encourage appropriate involvement. Identify key security and management contacts. Continually update and amend plans as needed, communicating necessary revisions.

Fire or Other Emergencies...

- Establish a written emergency evacuation/relocation plan and process that incorporates basic elements such as:
 - Reporting process for fire and other hazards, emergency escape procedures and routes, and specific instructions and procedures for shutting down critical business operations (i.e., equipment, production, and business activities).
 - Designated meeting sites outside the facility and process to account for employees after an evacuation.
 - Chain of command including names and job titles of people (or departments) that are responsible for emergency decision-making and response actions.
 - Safety detection and emergency warning systems, central control systems, and detailed instructions for floor emergency evacuation teams.
 - Education and training for all emergency-floor evacuation teams, building occupants, and visitors.
- Ensure all exits, corridors, and aisles are free and clear of obstruction.
- Clearly mark stairwells. Inside the stairwell on each level, post the stairwell and floor design, how far you must descend to reach the ground floor exit and whether or not the stairwell provides access to the roof. Post instructions, placards, and evacuation diagrams for emergency escape procedures and emergency escape route assignments on each floor. Display emergency fire procedure information in corridors.
- Make sure all safety detection and emergency warning systems such as the sprinkler system, standpipe system, fire alarm, public address system, fire department connections, emergency lights, and emergency power system, etc. are clearly marked, well maintained, and tested frequently.
- Routinely schedule and hold instructive drills to ensure occupant familiarity with emergency plans.
- Update evacuation and emergency response plans on an annual basis at minimum. The plan should be amended or updated as needed, with necessary revisions communicated to tenants and/or employees.
- Each building presents unique problems in emergency situations due to differences in design,



construction, fire-resistant qualities, height, floor layout, usage, and occupancy. Consider the above information as basic guidelines only. Always make sure you are in compliance with state or provincial laws, local codes, and regulations. Fire control and evacuation authorities (such as the fire department, consultants, insurance company) should be consulted for suggestions relating to a particular building.

More detailed information regarding high-rise safety can be found on the Emergencies and Disaster page of the National Safety Council's Website at <http://www.nsc.org/issues/prepare.htm>.

For additional information:

National Safety Council, <http://www.nsc.org>

Federal Emergency Management Agency, <http://www.fema.gov>

National Fire Protection Association, <http://www.nfpa.org>

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