



Policies & Procedures: Emergency and Fire Safety Plans

Proactively preparing for emergency situations is crucial in preventing loss and ensuring safety. Providing comprehensive safety information to employees, occupants, and visitors before and during a fire or emergency can save lives and minimize damage to your facility.

National and Provincial Fire Codes¹ mandate that all care and treatment occupancies have a detailed emergency plan. In addition to this, a fire safety plan can also be crucial for educating and preparing individuals on evacuation procedures, recognizing hazards, and using safety equipment within your facility.

Consideration should be given to preparing an evacuation and emergency plan as a priority. Even if a formal fire safety plan is not required for your facility, it is beneficial to have one in place. Refer to the Occupational Health and Safety Code for guidelines and recommendations on preparing an emergency evacuation plan².

Consult the National and Provincial Fire and Building Codes, as well as your local Fire Department, to determine if a fire safety plan is required for your facility. Facilities that require a fire safety plan should reference the section below for National Fire Code requirements and suggested recommendations.

Evacuation and Emergency Plans

An emergency can be defined as “an unexpected and usually, dangerous situation that calls for immediate action”. Emergencies usually occur when we least expect them. Therefore, preparing an emergency response plan for these situations in advance is the most important step for ensuring the safety of your employees, residents, and visitors.

Components of an Emergency Plan

- The full address of the facility.
- Contact information for essential staff members, fire wardens and key holders.
- All potential emergency situations such as fire, spills and leaks, critical injuries, loss of power, workplace violence, bomb threats and severe weather.
- Procedures during an emergency.
- Detailed evacuation plans to ensure everyone can safely exit the facility.
- Training for staff and occupants.

Procedures During an Emergency

1. Stay Calm: Remain calm at all times.
2. Activate Fire Alarm: If available, activate a fire alarm pull station to notify occupants, the third-party monitoring company, and the local fire department.

¹ National Fire Code: <https://nrc.canada.ca/en/certifications-evaluations-standards/codes-canada/codes-canada-publications/national-fire-code-canada-2020>

² Emergency & Evacuation Plans: <https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/planning.html>

3. **Evacuate Immediately:** Proceed directly to the nearest fire exit. Do not collect personal belongings or materials.
4. **Close Doors:** Close all doors to offices and hallways as you leave the facility.
5. **Follow Marked Routes:** Use clearly identified evacuation routes and exits marked with exit signs and emergency lighting.
6. **Keep Exits Clear:** Ensure fire exits are free from storage or any obstructions.
7. **Use Alternate Exits if Necessary:** If an emergency exit is blocked, use a secondary or tertiary exit.
8. **Proceed to Assembly Area:** Once outside, go directly to the designated assembly area, which should be well separated from the facility.
9. **Account for Occupants:** Implement a procedure to account for all occupants during an evacuation.
10. **Do Not Re-enter:** Do not re-enter the facility without approval from supervisory staff, the fire warden, or the fire department.
11. **“Defend in Place” if Trapped:** If trapped, find a fire-rated room, close the door, place towels or clothing at the bottom to block smoke, stay low, and contact emergency services if possible.

Evacuation Plans

A drawing of the facility should be created and posted at all major locations throughout the facility, including at all fire exits, stairwells, all entrances and elevator lobbies showing:

- current location within the facility
- all fire exits
- evacuation routes
- locations of fire equipment, including:
 - fire extinguishers
 - fire hoses
 - sprinkler system components
 - fire alarm devices including pull stations
- exterior assembly points
- first aid equipment
- locations for exterior shut-off valves

Training

Effective training is crucial for ensuring the safety of all occupants during an emergency. This section outlines the training requirements for both supervisory staff and general

employees, as well as the importance of regular fire drills and evacuation procedures.

Supervisory Staff and Fire Wardens:

- **Training Requirements:**
 - Must be trained in First Aid, CPR and the proper use of fire extinguishers.
- **Special Provisions:**
 - Identify persons needing assistance for evacuation and document their locations.
 - Ensure this information is included in the emergency plan for relay to emergency services.
- **Record Keeping:** Retain records of staff training and certification dates.

All Employees:

- **Emergency Training:**
 - Awareness of at least two points of exit from the facility.
 - Training reviewed annually, when facility changes occur, or when new employees are hired.
- **Record Keeping:** Retain records of all training sessions.

Fire Drills and Evacuation Procedures:

- Conduct at least once annually for all employees.
- Retain records of all fire drills.
- **Evaluation:**
 - Analyze the results of fire drills, including evacuation time, route effectiveness, and areas for improvement.
 - Revise emergency plans and provide additional training as needed.

Fire Safety Plans

Fire safety plans are essential for ensuring the safety of all occupants in a facility. These plans provide detailed procedures and guidelines to prevent fires and manage emergencies effectively.

A fire safety plan must be prepared in cooperation with the fire department and other regulatory authorities as per **Article 2.8.2.1. of the National Fire Code of Canada**. The plan must be reviewed annually to account for any changes in the building's use or characteristics.

Purpose of Fire Safety Plan

- Safe and calm evacuation from the facility.
- Effective use and maintenance of the fire protection equipment.
- Controlling fire hazards in the facility.

The Fire Safety Plan Document

The fire safety plan must receive approval from the local fire department. Once approved, it should be accessible and posted on-site for the fire department, supervisory staff, and other personnel.

Components of a Fire Safety Plan (As per the National Fire Code Section 2.8)

- Emergency procedures to be carried out in case of fire, including:
 - Sounding the fire alarm.
 - Notifying the fire department.
 - Instructing occupants on the procedures to be followed when the fire alarm sounds.
 - Evacuating occupants, including special provisions for persons requiring assistance.
 - Confining, controlling, and extinguishing the fire.
- Appointment and organization of designated supervisory staff to carry out fire safety duties.
- Training of supervisory staff and other occupants on their responsibilities regarding fire safety.
- Type, location, and operation of the building fire emergency systems, including diagrams.
- Holding of fire drills.
- Measures for controlling fire hazards in and around the building.
- Inspection and maintenance of building facilities provided for the safety of occupants.

Additional Facility-Specific Information

In addition to the components required by the National Fire Code, the fire safety plan should also include the following facility-specific information:

- The name and full address of the facility.
- Names and contact information for the facility owner, supervisory staff, and key holders.
- A brief description of the facility's operations, including the number of occupants.
- Identification of any persons requiring assistance

during evacuation and their locations within the building.

- “Defend in Place” safety requirements for occupants who cannot evacuate due to medical reasons.

Evacuation Plans / Diagrams

To ensure the safety of all occupants, detailed and accessible evacuation plans are crucial. The following guidelines outline the essential components of an effective evacuation plan:

- Evacuation plans must be posted throughout the building, including at all major locations, exits, entrances, stairwells, and elevators, as well as any other locations required by the local fire department.
- Evacuation plans should include drawings and these drawings should provide a detailed floor plan indicating:
 - Primary, secondary, and tertiary evacuation routes.
 - Identified emergency exits.
 - Fire protection features, such as fire extinguishers, hoses, sprinkler systems, and fire alarm devices.
 - Exterior assembly points.
 - Locations of first aid equipment.
 - Any special hazards, such as flammable liquids storage, generators, and gas shut-off valves.
- All items on the evacuation plan drawings should be represented by clear symbols. An index must be included to explain all symbols used.
- The drawings should include all relevant information regarding fire protection and life safety equipment, building controls, and any other pertinent details to ensure a comprehensive and effective evacuation strategy.
- Each posted evacuation plan should clearly indicate the current location of the viewer within the building, ensuring easy navigation during an emergency.

Identification and Maintenance of Fire Protection Equipment

Following the development of comprehensive evacuation plans, it is equally important to ensure the proper identification and maintenance of fire protection equipment within the facility. This section outlines the necessary steps to maintain the functionality and reliability of fire safety systems, thereby supporting the overall effectiveness of the fire safety plan.

Review and Compliance:

- Review the maintenance requirements for your fire protection and life safety equipment with your local fire department and service contractor. Ensure compliance with the National Fire Code.

Equipment Requiring Maintenance:

- The following equipment may be present in your facility and will require periodic checks, inspections, and testing:
 - fire department access
 - emergency power (generators)
 - emergency lighting
 - exit signs and exit integrity
 - fire alarm systems
 - portable fire extinguishers
 - heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment
 - smoke alarms and heat detectors
 - special extinguishing systems
 - fire pumps
 - water supply and hydrants
 - standpipe and hose systems
 - automatic sprinklers
- High buildings have additional testing and inspection requirements, including a central alarm and control facility, elevators, venting, and smoke control.

Maintenance Frequency:

- Regularly check, inspect, and test all equipment at the required intervals to ensure readiness during an emergency or fire situation. Consult your local fire department and the National Fire Code for the specific frequency of maintenance.

By diligently maintaining fire protection equipment, facilities can enhance safety and preparedness, ensuring that all systems function effectively in the event of an emergency.

Responsibilities of the Owner and Supervisory Staff

In order to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the fire safety plan, both the owner of the facility and the supervisory staff have distinct responsibilities. These roles are critical in maintaining fire safety standards and ensuring preparedness for any fire-related emergency.

Responsibility of the Owner:

- Ensure the facility complies with the National Fire Code.
- Prepare and maintain an up-to-date fire safety plan in accordance with the National Fire Code and notify the fire department of any changes to the plan.
- Provide alternate measures for the safety of the occupants during a shutdown of fire protection equipment.
- Post and maintain a copy of the fire emergency evacuation procedures on each floor.
- Retain records for all staff training.
- Retain all documentation on maintenance and inspections of fire protection, life safety, and building systems.

Responsibility of the Supervisory Staff:

- Be trained in the fire emergency procedures described in the fire safety plan before assuming any fire safety responsibilities.
- Ensure all keys or special devices needed to operate the fire protection or building systems are readily available.
- Oversee the approved fire safety plan and the specific responsibilities of the personnel, ensuring the plan details the responsibilities assigned to staff members.
- Designate and train alternate employees to act in required positions.
- Educate and train all building personnel and occupants in the use of fire protection equipment and the actions to be taken according to the fire safety plan.
- Ensure the fire safety plan is followed and reviewed annually, updating it as necessary.
- Implement procedures to deal with temporary shutdowns of the fire protection or building equipment.
- Contact the local fire department in case of an emergency situation.
- Sound the fire alarm and instruct occupants on the procedures to be followed.
- Check all areas of the building to ensure all persons have evacuated.
- Assist or provide special provisions for the evacuation of persons requiring assistance.
- Meet with and provide any required information to the local fire department when they respond to the facility.

- Confine, control, and extinguish a fire if possible, including closing doors to rooms, hallways, and wings of the facility. Use a fire extinguisher to control the fire if it is reasonably safe to do so.

Provisions for High Buildings

In addition to the responsibilities outlined for supervisors and owners, high buildings require specific provisions to ensure safety and effective emergency response. A building is considered a high building when it meets certain criteria, such as having a major occupancy floor level more than 18 meters (60 feet) above ground or having certain types of occupancy above the third story.

For high buildings, the fire safety plan must include additional requirements:

- **Training of Supervisory Staff:** Supervisory staff must be trained in using the building's voice communication system.
- **Elevator Procedures:** Supervisory staff must be familiar with the procedures for the use of elevators, including the firefighter's elevator, and ensure that keys are readily accessible.
- **Smoke Control and Emergency Systems:** Supervisory staff must be trained on operating smoke control or other emergency systems installed in the building. They must also be able to communicate the operation of these systems to the fire department.
- **Emergency Equipment Access:** Keys for any emergency equipment, building systems, rooms, or areas in the facility must be on-site and readily available at all times.
- **Fire Department Access:** Procedures must be established to facilitate fire department access to the building and provide details on the location of the fire.

Fire Drill Procedures and Frequency

Ensuring comprehensive preparedness, this fire safety plan integrates responsibilities, evacuation strategies, and equipment maintenance with regular fire drills to create a thorough and effective safety protocol for all occupants. Conducting regular fire drills is a critical element in ensuring that all components of the fire safety plan are effectively understood and implemented by both supervisory staff and

building occupants. These drills reinforce the emergency procedures, fostering a calm and efficient evacuation during actual fire emergencies. Fire drills are an important safety measure to ensure that all occupants and staff members are completely familiar with the emergency evacuation procedures. Fire drills must be held at intervals no greater than 12 months. In addition, fire drills shall be practiced for all shifts, including day, evening, and nighttime and when staffing levels are expected to be at the lowest. At the completion of all fire drills supervisory staff members should review the details of the fire drill, including length of time to evacuate, the effectiveness of the exit routes and areas for improvement. Depending on the results provided the fire safety plan may need to be revised.