

EVACUATION PLANNING



1.

Assemble a Planning Team

If your facility doesn't already have an emergency planning team, consider creating one to address evacuation along with other emergency issues. The team should include representatives from administration, facilities management, personnel, security, and the workforce and labor unions. If you have employees or tenants with disabilities, consider including them on the planning team as well.

2.

Determining an evacuation strategy

Full evacuation of a building may not always be a viable option. If the physical characteristics of the building's occupants make a full evacuation difficult, **and the physical structure of the building allows**, you may want to consider partial evacuation, horizontal evacuation or the use of areas of refuge.

Physical characteristics of building	Physical characteristics of occupants
<u>Number of floors</u>	<u>Number of occupants</u>
<u>Structural Design</u>	<u>Roles</u> (resident, employee, visitor)
<u>Building layout</u> (size, complexity)	<u>Age</u>
<u>Fire Safety Features</u> (fire doors, alarms, sprinkler systems, safe elevators, pressurized stairways)	<u>Familiarity with building</u>
<u>Availability of areas of refuge*</u> (balconies, stairwells)	<u>Levels of emergency procedures training</u>
	<u>Abilities and limitations</u>
	<u>Activities</u> (working, sleeping, medical treatment, etc.)

The planning team should consider the following questions when determining an evacuation strategy:

Occupants

- What are the peak occupancy times?
- How many people are in the building at peak occupancy times?
- How many of those people are familiar with the building?
- How many have been trained in emergency procedures?
- How many occupants will require assistance in evacuating?
- What kind of assistance is needed (attendant, chair, lift)?

Building

- Does the structure of the building allow for horizontal evacuation?
- Do areas of refuge exist, and if so what is their capacity?
- Are existing fire safety features sufficient to either shelter occupants awaiting rescue or allow evacuating occupants time to escape? (You may want the advice of the Fire Marshal's office to make this determination.)
- What procedures already exist, and what training has already been given?
- What assistive devices (evacuation chairs, lifts) are available?
- Are the resource requirements of the proposed evacuation strategy realistic (cost, manpower)? What are the alternatives?

**The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines an area of refuge as an accessible space, separated from the rest of the building by fire-resisting materials and fire doors that limit the passage of fire and smoke. Under the ADA areas of refuge are required in buildings with no sprinklers and without an adequate number of accessible exits.*

3.

Developing procedures

Once a strategy has been determined, procedures may need to be developed or updated to reflect the strategy.

Emergency procedures should consider:

Communication – What communications systems exist (radios, PA, bullhorns) and what is their range? Can they be heard over fire alarms? How will they be used?

Accountability – Is there a system in place that can tell you who is in the building at a given time? Is there a system for accounting for those people following an evacuation?

Evacuation routes – Are evacuation routes clearly posted? Are designated routes familiar to the building's occupants? (People will seek routes and exits that they are familiar with in an emergency. If you are designating routes that are not frequently used, plan to provide additional training.)

Special Needs Occupants – Is there a list of occupants who will need assistance in evacuating? (Consider the needs of people with limited mobility, sight, hearing, language and diminished mental capacity.) Is the list accessible to both building personnel and emergency responders during an evacuation? If assistive devices such as lifts or evacuation chairs are being used, who is trained in their use?

Elevators – If your facility has a fire safe elevator, will it be restricted to use by the disabled or emergency responders during an emergency? Who will operate it? How will occupants notify the elevator operator of their location?

4.

Drills & Training

In an emergency people will either respond the way they have been trained or they will respond according to their own knowledge and experience—whether limited or broad. They will rarely take the time to examine procedures they are unfamiliar with.

The scope of training will depend on the type of the occupants in the building. Employees should receive annual training in emergency plans and procedures. The amount of training provided to residents or tenants will depend on their role in an evacuation. If they are expected to evacuate themselves, training should be provided. Look for opportunities to incorporate training into standing meetings.

Develop an annual training schedule including three levels of training:

Orientation – Familiarize occupants with emergency procedures.

Tabletop exercises – Choose an emergency scenario and give occupants an opportunity to talk through an evacuation. Be sure to include members of the emergency planning committee in all tabletop exercises.

Drills – Conduct annual or semi-annual evacuation drills. Vary the time of day and the day of the week. Drills should be limited to 10 minutes, since this is the amount of time occupants are likely to have to reach safety during an emergency.

It is important to involve emergency responders both before and during training. The Fire Marshal's office (483-4200) is available to review plans and procedures before training begins. Inviting representatives from responding fire stations (483-4570) to tabletop exercises will provide valuable input for you and will give first responders a chance to become familiar with your building and procedures.

Contact the City of Lansing Emergency Management Office (483-4110) for additional planning resources.