

# ***FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY***

## ***EMERGENCY***

### ***OPERATIONS GUIDE***

*FOR BUSINESS & INDUSTRY*  
*APRIL, 2001*



***OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL***

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# ***INTRODUCTION***

## **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this Fire & Life Safety Emergency Operations Guide is to assist you, the Building Management and Tenant, in developing a Fire/Life Safety Plan for your building.

The Louisiana Office of the State Fire Marshal offers this guide to assist you in producing an emergency plan that complies with the applicable provisions of the NFPA 101 Life Safety Code. Following the suggestions in the guide will increase each tenant's opportunity for surviving an emergency in your building.

The function of the Fire/Life Safety Emergency Plan is to apprise each tenant of the established procedures to be implemented should an emergency arise. The plan will explain the building's Fire/Life Safety features, emergency organization, and address situations such as fire, medical emergencies, bomb threats, civil disturbances, loss of utility service(s), severe weather events, and emergency evacuation.

A building's plan should be issued to each tenant representative, and to each Fire/Life Safety Director and team, if so designated. It should be read thoroughly and updated as additional procedures are developed.

This manual can not hope to cover all contingencies or ensure against losses. However, the materials and procedures contained herein, if properly utilized along with education and training of all employees and/or tenants, will provide a basis for the decisions and actions that are necessary to minimize the loss of life and property in an emergency.

## **REMEMBER:**

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY – CALL**  
**911 !!!**

# ***KEY COMPONENTS OF A FIRE/LIFE SAFETY EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN***

- ? ***OBJECTIVES OF FIRE/LIFE SAFETY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN:***  
Outline specific objectives for your building, such as provisions for hazard prevention, emergency evacuation, and training.
- ? ***BUILDING FIRE/LIFE SAFETY FEATURES:***  
Provide a general description of the building(s), listing all of the Fire/Life Safety systems; structures and floor plans.
- ? ***FIRE PREVENTION – PROTECTION – CONTROL:***  
Describe in detail: practices in fire prevention, protection, and control.
- ? ***FIRE/LIFE SAFETY PERSONNEL:***  
Identify those individuals responsible for developing and maintaining the Fire/Life Safety emergency operations plan. It shall be the responsibility of the building owner or manager to appoint the Fire/Life Safety building response team from among staff.
- ? ***EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR FIRE/LIFE SAFETY PERSONNEL:***  
Describe procedures to be followed by Fire/Life Safety personnel in the event of an emergency. This will include identifying the Emergency Control Center (if applicable) responsibilities and communication(s) between Fire/Life Safety personnel, building occupants, and the Fire Department.
- ? ***EMERGENCY INSTRUCTIONS TO TENANTS AND OCCUPANTS:***  
Outline specific instructions to be followed by tenants and occupants in the event of an emergency or disaster.
- ? ***POST-FIRE OPERATIONS:***  
Outline procedures to be implemented after an emergency to get building fire protection and other services operational.
- ? ***RESPONSIBILITIES AND TRAINING:***  
Identify specific training requirements for Fire/Life Safety personnel, tenant responsibilities and update procedures to the Fire/Life Safety Emergency Operations Plan.
- ? ***SCHEDULE FOR FIRE DRILLS:***  
Develop a schedule for conducting fire drills. Drills must be kept in a log, subject to review by the Fire Marshal's Office.

# ***OVERVIEW***

## ***Developing your own Fire/ Life Safety Emergency Operations Plan***

An Emergency Operations Plan is a well thought out plan that takes into consideration the unique features of your building and its occupants. No one plan will work for every building, but the main planning components are the same.

### **GETTING STARTED:**

#### **PICK YOUR LIFE SAFETY TEAM:**

##### ***\*FIRE/LIFE SAFETY DIRECTOR***

Identify the person who will maintain and implement your Emergency Operations Plan. Pick a person who has not only the knowledge, but also the authority to implement the procedures outlined in the plan.

##### ***\*BUILDING RESPONSE TEAM***

Primary role is to investigate the source of an alarm or emergency and communicate their finding to the Emergency Control Center or Safety Director.

##### ***\*RECRUIT FLOOR WARDENS***

Floor wardens are volunteers selected from among the building staff and tenants. Their role is to assist in the evacuation of occupants from the building in the event of a fire alarm or emergency. Floor wardens are on the front lines of emergency response when a fire or emergency occurs. They must be familiar with the building evacuation plan and should receive training at least annually.

##### ***\*RECRUIT ASSISTANT MONITORS***

They are responsible for providing assistance to those individuals on a floor that require assistance to evacuate. These include people with disabilities or who suffer from medical problems.

##### ***\*SURVEY YOUR BUILDING'S OCCUPANTS***

Does your building house a changing population, as in a retail store or restaurant? Will the building occupants be familiar with the facility? Note any special needs that individuals might have, such as non-English speaking or people with disabilities.

## **DEVELOPING A PLAN:**

### ***\*DEVELOP A FLOOR PLAN***

Design a basic floor plan for each floor of the building. On each floor, indicate the location of all fire exits, fire extinguishers, manual pull stations and emergency equipment. Post the floor plan 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.

### ***\*DEVELOP WRITTEN PROCEDURES***

This can be a simple flyer that you distribute to tenants or a bound document that details the roles of staff and tenants during a fire or emergency. This document should be readily available for building occupants, and distributed to new staff during orientation.

### ***\*ASSIGN A MEETING PLACE***

Choose an outside location for occupants to meet after evacuation. The location should be a safe distance from the building, away from falling glass and debris. In the event of an evacuation, this is a place to assemble and take roll. The meeting place should be far enough away from the building to keep individuals out of the way of firefighting operations.

## **IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN:**

Staff or resident meetings, new employee orientations, and building newsletters are effective ways of introducing tenants to an Emergency Operations Plan. Explain the routes of evacuation and point out alarms and extinguishing equipment. Let them know where the predetermined meeting place is for each floor or section of the building, if evacuation becomes necessary. Explain the proper procedures for reporting a fire or emergency. Stress that elevators cannot be used for evacuation in a fire emergency.

## **REPORTING EMERGENCIES:**

The spread of fire can be very fast. It takes less than two minutes for a free-burning fire to reach temperatures over 1,000 degrees F. Controlling the fire and evacuating everyone safely depends upon immediate notification of the emergency to the Fire Department, Building Security, or Management personnel.

Post all telephones with the Fire Department's emergency number. In most locations within Louisiana, you can call 9-1-1 for Fire, Police, or Rescue. Make sure that the address of the building appears on the telephone. If the building Management wants to be notified, the appropriate number should also be listed on or near the telephone.

Building occupants should be instructed to call 9-1-1 whenever an emergency occurs. They should be able to provide the following information:

- ? The nature of the emergency
- ? The address of the building

- ? The nearest cross street
- ? The extent of the fire or emergency and any specific information relating to the incident, if known
- ? Follow the 9-1-1 operator's instructions (Never hang up until told to do so by the 9-1-1 operator)

**AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARM REPORTING:**

A common misconception is that the Fire Department always monitors building fire alarms. This is not true. Some are monitored "in house", and some building fire alarms are monitored by private monitoring companies. When such a company receives a signal indicating an alarm has activated, they in turn notify the appropriate Fire Department Dispatch Center. NEVER MAKE THE ASSUMPTION THAT A FIRE ALARM WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE REPORTED TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT. Always make sure that a call has been placed directly to 9-1-1 regardless of whether your building is monitored by a private monitoring service.

**ALARM & FALSE ALARM RESPONSE PROCEDURES:**

**\*TREAT EVERY ALARM AS AN EMERGENCY**

In every instance, if an alarm sounds, all building staff and occupants should react as though it is a real emergency:

- ? The Fire/Life Safety Director, Building Response Team, or responsible staff member, proceeds to the fire alarm panel. Initial evacuation begins immediately upon alarm.
- ? Notify the Fire Department by calling 9-1-1.
- ? If available, trained building staff members investigate to determine the location of the fire and take steps to extinguish it if possible, SAFELY.
- ? When the Fire Department arrives, the officer in charge takes command of the scene.
- ? **If building staff determines that the alarm is FALSE, prior to Fire Department arrival, call 9-1-1 and relay the information to Fire Department Dispatchers.**
- ? UPON INSTRUCTION OF THE DISPATCHER, building personnel may silence the alarm. DO NOT RESET THE ALARM UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO DO SO BY THE FIRE DEPARTMENT!
- ? The Fire Department Dispatcher will notify the fire companies enroute to your building that a false alarm has been indicated. Generally, one fire company will continue to your building to verify the alarm is false, and all other response will be cancelled.

**It is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO NOT RESET THE FIRE ALARM WHEN YOU BELIEVE AN ALARM IS FALSE, UNTIL DIRECTED TO DO SO BY THE FIRE DEPARTMENT.** If the alarm is reset prior to Fire Department permission, it may be necessary for the Fire Department to conduct a complete search of your building to verify that the alarm was false.

## **PROCEDURES FOR PERSONS UNABLE TO USE EXITS:**

### ***\*IF YOU CAN MOVE TO THE EXIT:***

- ? Move to the exit door outside of the stairwell. Wait until all persons on the floor have evacuated and traffic in the stairwell has cleared. If the hallway or entrance outside the stairwell has been compromised (filled with smoke, heat, any life threatening exposure), enter and wait on the stairwell landing immediately. Two people should wait with you while the floor warden informs the arriving Fire Department of your location. Make sure that the door to the stairwell is securely closed.
- ? Wait with your assistants for further instructions. The Fire Department will send firefighters to assist you if evacuation is necessary.
- ? If you are waiting in the exit stairwell and traffic builds from the evacuation of upper floors, re-enter your floor to allow others to pass and the stairwell to clear (Do this only if the area outside of the stairwell is not filled with smoke, heat, any life threatening exposure).
- ? If there are too many individuals to safely wait on the stair landing, an area of refuge should be sought on the floor, such as an apartment or a room with a door, window and telephone. Use the fire survival skills listed below to protect in place.
- ? Assistants should not attempt to carry you down the stairs unless conditions in the stairwell become threatening. If conditions deteriorate, the assistants can then perform a carry down the stairs to a safer area.

### ***\*IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO LEAVE THE FLOOR:***

If you do not have persons to assist you or are otherwise unable to leave, seek refuge on the floor by securing your area. A totally enclosed room with a solid door, telephone, and window is appropriate.

## **OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING SURVIVAL SKILLS TO “PROTECT IN PLACE”**

- ? **Use towels or clothing to block openings around doors or vents where smoke might enter. Put a wet cloth over your mouth or nose.**
- ? **Place a signal in the window. The signal can be anything that will call attention to your location. For example, tie the curtains in a knot.**
- ? **If smoke or fire enters your area, call 9-1-1 to report your location. Stay low to the floor to breathe the best air.**
- ? **It is advisable not to open or break windows. Often smoke from outside the building can enter through open windows. Breaking windows will put you at greater risk of smoke entering from the outside, and may hamper rescue efforts.**

### **FIRE DRILLS:**

In a fire drill, building occupants should duplicate as closely as possible the actions they would take if a fire occurred. A logbook indicating the date, time and section of the building in which the drill is conducted should be maintained. If your building fire alarm is monitored, notify the monitoring company of the drill immediately prior to its occurrence. If you are in a high-rise building, it is advisable to notify the Fire Department Dispatcher that a drill is to be conducted.

Fire drills may be pre-announced to the building staff and occupants, or they may be unannounced. Consideration of the building occupants and the use of the building may determine which type of drill is most appropriate.

### **CRITIQUE YOUR DRILL:**

Check for the following:

- ? Designated members (if applicable) notified and responded appropriately to the fire floor.
- ? Building occupants could clearly hear the alarm from all parts of the building and understand any additional instructions.
- ? Evacuation completed in an orderly and efficient manner. Maintain records of your drills for comparison and documentation purposes.
- ? Floor wardens guided occupants to safety, completed floor check, and reported to building staff or Fire/Life Safety Director upon completion of the evacuation.
- ? Disabled persons assisted appropriately.
- ? Elevators not used for evacuation.

### **ESTABLISHING A FIRE SCENARIO:**

You may choose to designate a specific location for the “Fire” and establish a scenario that would alter the basic fire drill procedures. It is best to attempt this type of drill after occupants have become familiar with their standard evacuation procedures. This type of drill may be more interesting to building occupants, as they have to make decisions when they encounter situations apart from the ordinary.

### **IDEAS FOR FIRE SCENARIOS:**

Post signs or locate building staff inside one of the exit stairwells to inform those attempting to enter that the stairwell is blocked by smoke, and they must choose an alternate egress route.

Use a cardboard box decorated with red paper flames or a flashing red light to indicate where the drill “fire” is located. Have the staff people discovering the fire show you the correct procedure to follow.

**APATHY OR LACK OF PARTICIPATION IN FIRE DRILLS:**

You may encounter some building occupants who refuse to participate in fire drills. Problems with frequent alarms in a building may make matters even worse.

Your best tactic in gaining cooperation in drills is to try to explain the advantages of participating. Explain that in real fire conditions, evacuation can be considerably more complicated. You may also inform employers that employee liability increases if they do not allow or encourage participation in the drill. If a fire did occur and one of their employees was killed or injured, it is possible that they may be named in a legal action due to their lack of support for the Fire/Life Safety training and procedures.

Making the drill more interesting by using a fire scenario or checking to make sure the drill will be held at a convenient time may yield better participation.

High-rise buildings and other high risk/special occupancies are required to maintain an up-to-date Fire/Life Safety Emergency Operations Plan. A high-rise building is classified as any building that has occupied floors 75 feet or higher above the lowest level of Fire Department vehicle access.



**Your local Fire Department or Fire Prevention Bureau may be able to provide further assistance and/or resources in Fire/Life Safety evacuation planning.**

**The Public Education Section of the Office of the State Fire Marshal may be contacted at 1-800-256-5452 or through the Fire Marshal website: [www.dps.state.la.us/sfm](http://www.dps.state.la.us/sfm)**