



CUSTOMER FOCUS ON LOSS CONTROL

Innovative Safety and Health Solutions™

Number 100

Practical Tips for Evacuation Planning

Protecting the health and safety of people is the first priority during an emergency. *Evacuation planning* is essential for every business. Evacuation plans will vary depending on the facility and the nature of the emergency. In the case of a fire, an immediate evacuation to a predetermined area away from the facility may be necessary. In the event of a hurricane, evacuation could involve the entire community and might take place over a period of days. When you develop evacuation plans, consider the needs of employees, emergency responders, visitors, and others. Consider these general requirements for Evacuation Planning:

Designate Roles and Responsibilities

- Establish a clear chain of command. Identify who has the authority to order and direct an evacuation.
- Designate wardens to assist others in an evacuation and to account for personnel and visitors.
- Designate personnel to continue or shut down critical operations while an evacuation is underway.

Establish Evacuation Routes

- Designate primary and secondary evacuation routes and exits.
- Install emergency lighting in case of a power outage during an emergency.
- Ensure that evacuation routes and emergency exits are:
 - clearly marked and well lit.
 - wide enough and unobstructed at all times, and safe for everyone who must use them.

Provide Evacuation Information

- Establish, document, post, and distribute evacuation policies and procedures.
- Provide emergency information, such as checklists and evacuation maps. Post the maps in strategic locations.
- Consider the information needs of vendors, customers, and visitors.

Provide Evacuation Training

Train employees in evacuation procedures. Hold sessions at least annually, or whenever:

- Employees are hired.
- Wardens and other special assignments are designated.
- New equipment, materials or processes are introduced.
- Procedures are updated or revised.
- Exercises show that employees performance must be improved.

Consider Special Situations

- Establish procedures for helping persons with disabilities. Consider elevators, evac chairs, buddy systems, areas of refuge, signs, alarms, and communication. Know the relevant aspects of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Be sure that you can communicate essential information to people who do not speak English.

Consider Community Needs

- Coordinate your plan with the local emergency management office and outside agencies such as fire and police.
- Consider employees' transportation needs for community-wide evacuations.

Know What to Do After an Evacuation

- Designate assembly areas where personnel should gather after an evacuation.
- Plan to take a head count after the evacuation. Determine the names and last known locations of personnel not accounted for.
- Establish a method of accounting for non-employees (customers, vendors, visitors).
- Establish procedures for further evacuation in case the incident expands.

