

Life Safety: Evacuation Planning

Protecting the health and safety of individuals is the first priority during an emergency. *Evacuation planning* is one common means of protecting individuals. 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 developing evacuation plans, consider the needs of employees, emergency responders, visitors, and others. Include provisions for facility shut-down, and coordinate plans with the local emergency management office and various outside agencies. Establish procedures for assisting persons with disabilities. Consider elevators, evacuation chairs, buddy systems, and areas of refuge.

Consider these general requirements for Evacuation Planning:

Designate Roles and Responsibilities

- Establish a clear chain of command. Identify personnel who have 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, clear, and unobstructed at all times, and unlikely to expose evacuating personnel to additional hazards.

Provide Evacuation Information

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

LOSS CONTROL TIPS

Provide Evacuation Training

- Train employees in evacuation procedures. Hold sessions at least annually, or when:
 - 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 assisting persons with disabilities. Consider elevators, evacuation chairs, buddy systems, areas of refuge, signs, alarms, and means of communication. Be familiar with the relevant requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Establish procedures to assist those who do not speak English.

Community Needs

- Coordinate plans with the local emergency management office and various outside agencies.
- Consider employees' transportation needs for community-wide evacuations.

After an Evacuation

- Obtain an accurate head count after an evacuation.
 - Designate assembly areas where personnel should gather after an evacuation.
 - 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).
 - Establish procedures for further evacuation in case the incident expands.

References

1. *Code for Safety to Life from Fire in Buildings and Structures.* (Life Safety Code) (National Fire Codes, NFPA 101). Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association, c1994.
2. *Employee Emergency Plans and Fire Prevention Plans.* 29 CFR 1910.38 Department of Labor. Occupational Safety and Health Administration.
3. *How to Prepare for Workplace Emergencies.* (OSHA 3088) Washington, DC: Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 1995.
4. *Recommended Practice for Disaster Management.* (National Fire Codes, NFPA 1600). Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association, c1995.

For more information, contact your local Hartford agent or your Hartford Loss Control Consultant. Visit The Hartford's Loss Control web site at <http://www.thehartford.com/corporate/losscontrol/>

The information provided in these materials is intended to be general and advisory in nature. It shall not be considered legal advice. The Hartford does not warrant that the implementation of any view or recommendation contained herein will: (i) result in the elimination of any unsafe conditions at your business locations or with respect to your business operations; or (ii) will be an appropriate legal or business practice. The Hartford assumes no responsibility for the control or correction of hazards or legal compliance with respect to your business practices, and the views and recommendations contained herein shall not constitute our undertaking, on your behalf or for the benefit of others, to determine or warrant that your business premises, locations or operations are safe or healthful, or are in compliance with any law, rule or regulation. Readers seeking to resolve specific safety, legal or business issues or concerns related to the information provided in these materials should consult their safety consultant, attorney or business advisors. All information and representations herein are as of March 2009.