

Fire safety

Buildings under construction or renovation require an evacuation plan

The constructor, general contractor, or project manager should develop and implement a fire safety evacuation plan before work starts. The plan should be in writing and distributed to all workers and subtrades on the project, including site visitors.

- a) Document and post the name and phone numbers of all personnel responsible for managing the fire safety evacuation plan, including after-hours contact information.
- b) Post emergency evacuation procedures, including warnings not to use elevators when a fire alarm sounds.
- c) Post floor plans identifying means of egress, exit stairwells, portable fire extinguishers, fire-hose stations, and the outside assembly area.
- d) Appoint fire warden(s) to ensure that everyone evacuates work areas when a fire alarm is activated.
- e) Post contact information for the security company that oversees "hot work" requirements as part of the fire code. Ensure that all construction employees are made aware of "hot work" requirements.
- f) Where other portions of a building remain occupied during construction or renovation, ensure that those other portions have an evacuation plan and that yours aligns with it.
- g) Include notice and awareness of the evacuation plan in all meetings with project management, workers, foremen, subcontractors, suppliers, and others who may be on site.
- h) Hold fire drills using the existing alarm system or an alternative such as compressed air horns, shouts of 'fire,' etc. Conduct a post-mortem on response, performance, and awareness of personnel.
- i) When work is to be done on alarm or sprinkler systems, the sections involved must be isolated and the remainder of the system kept in service. When it is necessary to shut down an entire alarm or sprinkler system, implement and enforce a 24-hour fire watch until the system is returned to full service. Post notices to this effect, including the order to call 911 immediately in the event of fire.

Evacuation Checklist

- Do evacuation procedures accurately reflect and align with the existing fire alarm system? Do construction workers know how to respond to alarm signals?
- Are fire alarm devices audible above normal background noise and identifiable by construction workers on site?
- Are provisions made for personnel working alone in isolated areas such as mechanical/electrical rooms?
- Where possible, are at least two escape routes in different directions provided and kept clear at all times for construction workers to use?
- Would enclosed escape routes such as stairwells be compromised by fire and smoke in surrounding areas?
- Are all fire doors kept closed and clear of obstructions?
- Are escape routes and emergency exits clearly marked with signs?
- Are lobbies that are equipped with Fire Fighter elevators kept clear at all times?
- Will emergency lighting be operational during nighttime construction?
- Is there a method such as a sign-in sheet for recording the presence of all construction personnel on the job at all times?
- Has an assembly point been identified where construction workers can evacuate to the outside?
- Have good housekeeping practices been established and maintained throughout the construction area?

Equipment Checklist

- Fire Extinguishers:** Check all the portable extinguishers throughout the construction area to ensure they are fully pressurized, mounted correctly, and not more than 75 feet away.
- Fire Hose Stations:** Check hose stations daily to confirm they are fully accessible and clear of any obstructions.
- Emergency Lighting:** Check to confirm that exit fixtures are illuminated at all times during construction; ensure that emergency lighting remote lamps are checked and properly adjusted to provide light at exits.
- Fire Separation Devices:** Check fire dampers, fire doors, and fire walls to ensure they are intact and will prevent the spread of fire from construction areas to other areas that may be occupied by tenants.
- Sprinkler Protection:** Check sprinkler heads for any obstructions to ensure that water flow will not be affected in the event of fire.
- Fire Alarm System:** Check all manually operated pull stations and smoke and heat detectors to ensure they are not obstructed and will remain operational at all times during construction.
- Fire Hydrants:** Check to ensure that private and/or city hydrants are clear of any obstructions.

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