



Tacoma Fire Department



Tacoma Fire Department
Emergency Management Division
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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to assist you in understanding and developing the emergency plans that are required in the City of Tacoma. The International Fire Code, as adopted by Washington State and the City of Tacoma in Chapter 4 of the 2006 Fire Code, requires that fire and earthquake safety and evacuations plans be developed for a variety of occupancies. All three plans mentioned above can be compiled into one emergency plan as long as all the elements listed in Section 2 are included in the plan. As a business owner, apartment manager, or administrator it is your responsibility to write your facilities emergency plan.

The good news is that you are the expert for your building! You know how many occupants you have, what the lay out of your facility is and what type of activities people do in your building. That knowledge, combined with the information in this handbook will help you develop a plan that will lessen the tragic impact of fires, earthquakes and other disasters on your occupants.



SECTION 1

Why Do We Need An Emergency Plan?

Having an emergency plan for your organization is a critical link in the community's preparedness. On a larger scale, governments at the federal, state and local level prepare plans to take care of the infrastructure of a community which may be damaged in a large scale emergency - including the roads, bridges, utility and communications systems we rely upon daily. They plan how to warn people, and how to get fire, police and public works services to those who need them, for example.

An emergency can often overwhelm the resources of a community (and when that happens we tend to call it a "disaster.") The services you have come to rely upon may not be available - often for several days. Services such as being able to call 9-1-1 and receive a quick response for fire suppression, medical aid or police protection, for example, may simply not be an option until conditions stabilize somewhat. It is at this point that your emergency plan becomes absolutely critical, and the effort you have put forth toward preparedness becomes supremely valuable.

Almost any emergency has consequences that can be minimized or often avoided through prior planning. The more time and effort you are able to dedicate to emergency planning and preparedness, the safer your employees will be and the better chance your organization will have of surviving an emergency.

What Should We Prepare For?

Obviously, many events can be emergencies. Some are natural events and others are "man-made" events. Some can happen anywhere, while others are more apt to happen in a particular geographic region. Any of them can threaten the very existence of your organization - and if not the existence, at least its financial stability. The size of that impact has a trickle-down effect, which directly touches your employees, their families, and the community at large.

In Tacoma the most likely hazards we face are the following:

- Fire
- Earthquake
- Landslide
- Hazardous materials incident
- Explosion
- Severe weather
- Volcanic hazards
- Flood
- Communications or energy failure
- Health epidemic
- Terrorism or civil disturbance

This document will help you put together the emergency plans that are *required by law or code*. But it is also in your best interest to consider the effects a disaster may have on you in terms of business continuity. Give some critical thought to:

- Putting together some emergency supplies, such as a supply of stored water and food, first aid kit, flashlights, battery-operated radio, extra batteries, and tools and supplies you may need such as plastic, duct tape, shutoff wrench for utilities, work gloves, garbage bags, pry bar, etc.
- How you would contact key employees after hours
- How you would deal with the loss of a critical supplier or vendor
- Designating an alternate location from which you might be able to conduct business
- Creating a backup plan for your vital records
- Making certain you are adequately insured

SECTION 2

What is an Occupancy and Where is a Plan Required?

The term occupancy, as related to the Fire Code, refers to the type of activity being performed within the building. Descriptions of the occupancy groups referred to in this document are listed below.

A fire safety and evacuation plan must be prepared and maintained for the following occupancies and buildings as required by the Fire Code.

Occupancy Group Descriptions

1. **Group A occupancy:** Assembly occupancies, e.g. theaters, auditoriums, etc. with an occupant load of 100 or more persons.
2. **Group B occupancy:** Having an occupant load of 500 or more persons or more than 100 persons above or below the lowest level of exit discharge.
3. **Group E occupancy:** Educational occupancies.
4. **Group H occupancy:** Building or structure, or a portion thereof that involves the manufacturing, processing, generation or storage of materials that constitute a physical or health hazard.
5. **Group I occupancy:** Building or structure, or a portion thereof in which people, cared for or living in a supervised environment
6. **Group R1 occupancy:** Transient residential occupancies (hotel, motel, boarding house).
7. **Group R-2 occupancy:** College and University Buildings.
8. **High-rise buildings:** Buildings having occupied floors located more than 75 feet above the lowest level of fire department vehicle access.
9. **Group M occupancy:** Buildings used for the display and sale of merchandise. (Group M buildings having an occupant load of 500 or more persons or more than 100 persons above or below the lowest level of exit discharge.
10. **Covered Malls:** exceeding 50,000 square feet (4,645 m²) in aggregate floor area.)
11. **Underground buildings:** Building spaces having a floor level used for human occupancy more than 30 feet below the lowest level of exit discharge.
12. **Buildings with an atrium:** and having an occupancy in Group A, Group E, or Group M.

SECTION 3

What is a Fire Evacuation Plan?

A written plan addressing each of the eight items listed below.

Fire evacuation plans need to include the following:

1. Emergency egress or escape routes and whether evacuation of the building is to be complete or, where approved, by selected floors or areas only.
2. Procedures for employees who must remain to operate critical equipment before evacuating.
3. A procedure for accounting for employees and occupants after evacuation has been completed.
4. Identification and assignment of personnel responsible for rescue or emergency medical aid.
5. The preferred and any alternative means of notifying occupants of a fire or emergency.
6. The preferred and any alternative means of reporting fires and other emergencies to the fire department or designated emergency response organization.
7. Identification and assignment of personnel who can be contacted for further information or explanation of duties under the plan.
8. A description of the emergency voice/alarm communication system alert tone and preprogrammed voice messages, where provided.

What is a Fire Safety Plan?

A written plan addressing each of the seven items listed below.

Fire safety plans need to include the following:

1. The procedure for reporting a fire or other emergency.
2. The life safety strategy and procedures for notifying, relocating, or evacuating occupants.
3. Site plans indicating the following:
 - a) The occupancy assembly point.
 - b) The locations of fire hydrants.
 - c) The normal routes of fire department vehicle access.
4. Floor plans identifying the locations of the following:
 - a) Exits.
 - b) Primary evacuation routes.
 - c) Secondary evacuation routes.
 - d) Accessible egress routes.
 - e) Areas of refuge.

- f) Manual fire alarm boxes.
- g) Portable fire extinguishers.
- h) Occupant-use hose stations.
- i) Fire alarm annunciators and controls.
5. A list of major fire hazards associated with the normal use and occupancy of the premises, including maintenance and housekeeping procedures
6. Identification and assignment of personnel responsible for maintenance of systems and equipment installed to prevent or control fires.
7. Identification and assignment of personnel responsible for maintenance, housekeeping and controlling fuel hazard sources.

What is an Earthquake Emergency Plan?

A written plan addressing each of the seven items listed below.

An earthquake safety plan needs to include the following:

1. A method of insuring that employees and occupants understand the meaning of and can execute correctly "Drop, Cover, and Hold," which is the correct action to take during an earthquake to avoid injury.
2. A person or team designated to assess the condition of the building after an earthquake to determine if an evacuation is necessary or recommended. This decision shall be based upon structural integrity of the building, the condition of evacuation routes, and assessment of hazards that occupants might encounter as they leave the building.
3. A method of insuring that employees and occupants understand the hazards they may encounter on the building exterior as a result of an earthquake.
4. The preferred and any alternative means of evacuation and communicating this decision to the employees and occupants of the building.
5. Primary and secondary evacuation routes shall be identified from all areas of the building.
6. A location a safe distance from any buildings shall be designated as the meeting area for building employees and occupants.
7. A method of accounting for all persons shall be established in the plan.

Maintenance of Your Plan

Fire safety, earthquake safety, and evacuation plans must be reviewed and/or updated annually by occupants or as necessitated by changes in staff assignments, occupancy, or the physical arrangement of the building.

Availability of Your Plan

Fire safety, earthquake safety, and evacuation plans must be available in the workplace for reference and review by employees, and copies shall be furnished to the code official for review upon request.

SECTION 4

Emergency Evacuation Drills

Emergency evacuation drills must comply with the provisions of this section and be conducted in the occupancies listed in Section 1 or when required by the code official.

Required emergency evacuation drills must be held at intervals specified in Table 1 or more frequently where necessary to familiarize all occupants with the drill procedure.

Table 1

FIRE, EARTHQUAKE, AND EVACUATION DRILL FREQUENCY AND PARTICIPATION		
GROUP OR OCCUPANCY	FREQUENCY	PARTICIPATION
Group A	Quarterly	Employees
Group B	Annually	Employees
Group E	Monthly	All occupants
Group I	Quarterly on each shift	Employees
Group R-1	Quarterly on each shift	Employees
Group R-2	Four Annually	All occupants
Group R-4	Quarterly on each shift	Employees
High-rise Buildings	Annually	Employees

Recordkeeping

Records must be maintained on site of required emergency evacuation drills and include the following information:

1. Identity of the person conducting the drill.
2. Date and time of the drill.
3. Notification method used.
4. Staff members on duty and participating.
5. Number of occupants evacuated.
6. Special conditions simulated.
7. Problems encountered.
8. Weather conditions when occupants were evacuated.
9. Time required to accomplish complete evacuation.