

Emergency Evacuation Plan

A Guide to Help Episcopal Churches Reduce Risk to
People and Property in the Event of a Fire



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I. Emergency Management Action Planning

Fire Emergency Preplanning.

It is impossible to predict how serious an (emergency) incident will become. It is, therefore, imperative for individuals to understand what is expected of them before such an emergency occurs.

Some easy-to-follow steps that can be taken to minimize problems are listed below:

1. Develop and maintain a practical, easy-to-follow, written plan. This plan should be distributed to all members of the organization, and should be updated periodically.
2. Maintain copies of important documents at a secure off-site location.
3. Prepare and post floor plans that show primary and alternative evacuation routes. Establish a means to determine that all individuals have evacuated the premises.
4. Provide periodic training in the use, location, and maintenance of portable fire extinguishers for staff, lay personnel, teachers, etc.
5. Conduct semiannual fire drills. Ensure that an adequate number of trained personnel are available to provide direction and support in the evacuation of all occupants, with particular attention to assisting handicapped persons, small children and the elderly. If necessary, obtain special evacuation chairs available for moving physically impaired people down stairs and along horizontal paths of egress.
6. Post emergency telephone numbers on all telephones.
7. Provide emergency power for all fire protection systems, lighting, and all exit signs.
8. Request the local Fire Department to make periodic pre-fire plans and fire prevention inspections of the building.
9. Develop an attitude among staff, lay personnel and members of the congregation that fire prevention is everybody's responsibility.

II. Fire Safety Plan

INTRODUCTION: MANAGING THE EMERGENCY

The key to emergency planning is to have an organizational team to manage the emergency. The responsibility of the team is to (attempt to) control what is happening within the context of the team's ability. The objectives are to protect the people in the facility and to minimize loss.

Someone should be assigned to take charge during a fire emergency and designated as the Fire Safety Director. There should be additional staff who can serve as a backup should the Fire Safety Director not be at the location when a fire breaks out. The backup individual(s) should be familiar with the responsibilities of the Fire Safety Director and be capable of performing the specific duties.

Fire Safety Plan

Develop a written fire safety plan if it does not already exist. This plan should be contained in a bound book or loose-leaf binder and should not be a separate collection of pages. The pages should be dated and numbered so that the latest edition of the manual can be easily identified.

The manual should contain sections discussing the following:

1. Building Information which includes Floor Plans and Layouts
2. Duties and Responsibilities of the Designated Team members by Title
3. Instructions on Building Evacuation During an Actual Fire
4. Instructions on what to do during a Fire Drill
5. Extinguishing and/or Controlling a Fire
6. Specific Fire Prevention and Protection Program
7. List of the individuals' names, phone numbers and extensions, indicating normal working hours.

Every one of the above seven topics should become an individual section in the manual. It should be brief and to the point and contain enough detail so that it can be implemented with a minimum of effort. It will also need to be tailored to meet any specific or unique requirements.

BUILDING INFORMATION

This section should include a page or two including the actual layout of the Church, Parish Hall, School Facilities, etc.

Exits should be indicated as well as the location of fire extinguishers and any other fire safety equipment such as alarm boxes.

If there is Speaker system or any other type of broadcast or public address system, this should also be indicated.

Note: Include any other visual materials that can aid with identifying the premises and points of assembly once the premises has been evacuated.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DESIGNATED TEAM MEMBERS

If practical, a Fire Safety Director should be named and be responsible for the following:

1. The written fire safety plan dealing with fire drills and evacuation procedures.
2. Selection of qualified individuals to serve as team members to assist with drills and evacuation procedures.
3. Availability and readiness of the team.
4. Conducting fire and evacuation drills.
5. Posting of up-to-date organization charts of team members including phone numbers.
6. The training and activities of the team members.
7. Making suggestions and recommendations as appropriate.
8. Ensuring recording of fires and false alarms in a log book.
9. Establishing a dialogue and being a liaison with the municipal fire authorities and to maintain records for inspections by local authorities.

In the event of a fire, the Fire Safety Director should be at a pre-designated location to supervise and coordinate the following activities:

1. Ensure that the Fire Department has been notified of any fire or fire alarm.
2. Directions for evacuation procedures as provided in the Fire Safety Plan.
3. Reporting on the condition(s) of the fire location for dissemination to the Fire Department upon arrival.

BUILDING EVACUATION: WHAT TO DO DURING A FIRE EMERGENCY

Ascertain that there is an real emergency by determining the location and extent of the fire. When you locate an actual fire you should:

1. Activate the Fire Alarm Box.
2. Inform other members of the Fire Team as to the location and extent of the fire. See that all occupants are notified of the fire, and that they proceed immediately to the designated areas for evacuation.
3. Evacuation should be via stairs or street level exits if they are not blocked by the fire.
4. Evacuate the entire floor and surrounding area.
5. A search must be conducted in lavatories and other areas to assure all persons are out. Specific individuals should be assigned as searchers so that this function can be performed efficiently and quickly.
6. After evacuation, perform a head count to be sure that all known occupants have been evacuated.

WHILE EVACUATING

1. In the event that a stairway or exit is unusable, or is cut off by fire and/or smoke, an alternate means must be selected.
2. Never use elevators during a Fire emergency.
3. As the evacuation is being done, close but don't lock all doors behind you.
4. As the evacuation progresses get as far away from the building as possible to avoid injury or interference with the fire authorities.

FIRE DRILLS

A Fire Drill is the most important training aid that the Fire Team possesses. It is useful for both staff and occupants. Through Fire Drills one can ensure the training of newly hired staff and newly designated Fire Team members. Periodic drills also refresh the training of all staff members.

Fire Drills provide the opportunity to evaluate the performance of the Emergency Evacuation Plan. From this evaluation, areas of training requiring more emphasis may surface and revisions to the original plan can be developed. The drills maintain awareness for the occupants of the building(s) that the possibility of fires exists and what is to be done should one occur.

Members of The Fire Team should be notified in writing of the schedule of a drill. Drills should be conducted as follows:

1. Team members should walk through the route to be taken during the drill for familiarization.
2. When the Fire Evacuation signal is heard, the Team should proceed with the evacuation plan. Physical exiting from the building is not necessary unless the team leader wishes to carry this portion of the evacuation plan to its conclusion.

REFINEMENTS

The Team needs to be alert and observe problems and/or difficulties experienced during a Fire Drill. A team evaluation should follow each Fire Drill to allow for an exchange of information which could lead to improving the plan.

Certain Individuals should be asked to keep records of their observations on the following items:

1. Participation
2. Alarm. Was it audible throughout the floors?
3. Did the Fire Director and Team Members handle their duties correctly (i.e., understand the use of available communications, direct the searches, use the proper exits, locate the extinguishers.)
4. Any general comments?

EXTINGUISHING OR CONTROLLING FIRES

REMEMBER: YOUR FIRST RESPONSIBILITY IS TO ASSIST IN EVACUATING YOUR FLOOR. **EXTINGUISHING FIRES IS OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE.**

Physically extinguishing or controlling fires is the responsibility of the Fire Department.

However, it is possible and may sometimes be necessary to extinguish or control a fire when you:

- Have transmitted a fire alarm.
- Have alerted the Fire Team members of the exact location of the fire.
- Have informed the other team members of your intention to extinguish or control the fire.
- Have the correct type of fire extinguisher available.

If you cannot extinguish, try to keep the fire in a contained area by closing but not locking the doors.

FIRE PREVENTION

As members of a fire team, you should be more keenly aware of potential fire hazards than others. Here are some simple rules to follow that will prevent fires and eliminate the need for ever having to use the Emergency Evacuation Plan:

1. Don't empty ashtrays into wastebaskets.
2. Don't smoke or light matches near flammable materials.
3. Don't obstruct aisles, hallways, exits or fire doors.
4. Don't allow any machinery to operate unattended.
5. Do maintain good housekeeping habits throughout the facilities.
6. Do store flammable materials and liquids in closed metal cabinets
7. Do obey all NO SMOKING signs.
8. Do check on a regularly scheduled basis electrical facilities and extension cords for fraying or cuts.
9. Do report all Fire hazards to the appointed Fire Safety Director.

EDUCATING EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

The successful completion of a fire drill or the successful evacuation of staff during an actual emergency depends upon everyone knowing exactly what to do.

It is the Fire Team's responsibility to make sure that all staff members know where they are to exit the floor, what to do during the evacuation and how to conduct themselves at all times.

PANIC CAN BE AS DANGEROUS AS A FIRE

The Fire Team can educate the staff members by displaying good fire prevention habits and by knowledge of the Emergency Evacuation Plan. Be prepared to answer any questions those individuals might have regarding the Plan.

It is a good idea to periodically take the time to walk around and see if other members of the Fire Team have any questions. All occupants should know who the appointed members of the Fire Team are. This will open up a forum for questions to be answered and help promote ongoing communication.

THE FINAL OBJECTIVE: OUR OBJECTIVE IS A SAFE EVACUATION DURING A FIRE EMERGENCY

When dealing with people, the Fire Team must be prepared for emergency situations that are not covered anywhere in writing. Problems will arise that must be dealt with instantly. It is the team's responsibility to handle these situations calmly and confidently.

This plan will lessen the problems that may be faced during an actual emergency and will enable everyone to perform his or her duties with confidence. By doing so the staff will have trust in the Fire Team.

III. Action Lists

Actions When Fire Occurs

When a fire occurs, the following actions should be taken without delay:

1. Sound the alarm and initiate procedures for evacuation of the building
2. Call the Fire Department
3. Activate the emergency evacuation plan
4. Account for all individuals
5. Make certain that someone directs the Fire Department to the correct location
6. Cooperate with the Fire Department

Actions After The Fire

7. Notify your Insurance Carrier
8. Institute cleanup action and restoration of building functions, with special attention to liturgical artifacts, relics, and historic records.
9. Ensure that building fire protection devices, such as sprinklers, portable fire extinguisher, smoke detection systems, etc., are restored to service
10. Assist with the assessment of damage or loss
11. Prepare a statement for the news media
12. Conduct a post-fire analysis with staff and lay personnel
13. Update and improve the fire plan, based on what is learned each time it is executed.