

on your organization. Fire safety planning is not a single event; it is an on-going process.

An approved Fire Safety Plan typically contains the following information:

- a)** the emergency procedures to be used in case of fire, including sounding the fire alarm, notifying the fire department, and provisions for access for fire fighting;
- b)** instructing occupants on procedures to be followed when the fire alarm sounds, evacuating endangered occupants, and confining, controlling and extinguishing the fire;
- c)** the appointment and organization of designated supervisory staff to carry out fire safety duties;
- d)** the instruction of supervisory staff and other occupants so they are aware of their responsibilities for fire safety;
- e)** the holding of fire drills including the emergency procedures appropriate to the building;
- f)** the control of fire hazards in the building;
- g)** the maintenance of building facilities provided for the safety of occupants;
- h)** the provision of alternative measures for the safety of occupants during any shutdown of fire protection equipment and systems or parts thereof; and
- i)** instructions, including schematic diagrams describing the type, location and operation of building fire emergency systems.

Emergency situations come in all kinds of scenarios and at the most unlikely times. Frequency of practice directly affects quality of outcome.

Regardless of developing plans for specific occupancies, building owners/managers and occupants must clearly under-

stand that their safety depends on knowing and understanding their roles within the fire safety plan and appropriate actions to be taken during an emergency or fire drill. There are five easy steps in establishing an Emergency Fire Plan:

- 1)** Establish an emergency management team
- 2)** Analyze risks and response capabilities
- 3)** Develop the fire safety plan
- 4)** Provide training and implement the fire safety plan
- 5)** Test, evaluate and modify the fire safety plan

TENANT PARTICIPATION VITAL

The property manager and/or appointed individual should take the responsibility for organizing a fire emergency management team and develop the fire safety plan in cooperation with the tenant representatives. Within multi-tenant buildings, the floor warden team or supervisory team should be comprised of a floor warden for each occupied space, back-up deputy and searchers. In a building where the occupancy is just one tenant, a floor warden for the entire floor and back-up deputy with searchers will suffice. It is extremely important to have a floor warden representative from tenants (especially multi-tenanted floors) to ensure their involvement in the overall fire safety plan.

Fire drills provide additional training for designated individuals so they can become more familiar with the use of the building's fire safety features and communication protocols. It is very important that all personnel with specific responsibilities attend a debriefing meeting following every fire drill to review the procedures and reactions of all participants. At this time, problem areas can be identified and corrected.

During the fire drill exercise, tenant managers, department heads and floor wardens monitor the emergency response of the tenants and employees in specific areas of the building. Each fire drill exercise must be evaluated and documented with recommendations for improvements made by the property management team and the floor warden teams who thoroughly understand the facilities fire safety plan evacuation procedures.

In addition to this, the people requiring assistance should be educated on fire safety plan procedures. They will require assistance in evacuating and normally would not be able to take the stairs (this should be written in the fire safety plan on special procedures). They should be assisted by designated "buddies" who are also part of the team, where necessary. In the case of an alarm, the fire department will determine if these individuals are to be evacuated based on an assessment of the alarm scenario.

Waiting for the fire department to arrive and assess the situation before instructing occupants is not a good idea for two reasons. First, when firefighters arrive they expect all occupants to be in a safe location, known as the assembly area, so that firefighters can focus on controlling the fire instead of performing search and rescue missions.

Second, waiting the five to 10 minutes it takes for firefighters to arrive could prove lethal. The delay may eventually require occupants to move through smoke-filled areas in an attempt to reach safety.

A well mapped out fire safety plan and evacuation does not come about without a great deal of planning, insight and experience. Education should be part of the implementation. It must be clear and concise and effective enough to ensure a quick evacuation, which is ultimately the goal for everyone's safety. ▲

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