



Fire prevention week has always been about how to increase chances of survival in the event that a fire strikes at the workplace by creating a fire safety plan and practicing it. Although the nation celebrates fire prevention during one lone week in October, promoting fire safety and prevention must be front and centre in business operators at large fifty-two weeks of the year. Our workplaces are filled with many potential sources of fire that may cost someone their life if they are not aware of the immediate fire hazards. Recent figures still indicate that the majority of workplace fires could have been prevented. Implementing fire prevention alone, without considering other factors, will not prove either suitable or sufficient response to building fires as these are mostly directed to events before the fire emergency actually starts or for the first few minutes afterwards.

As of November 21st 2007, the Ontario Fire Code section 2.8.2.1 (4) states the building fire safety plan shall be reviewed as often as necessary, but at intervals not greater than 12 months, to ensure that it takes account of changes in the use and other characteristics of the building. Although the building fire safety plan contains several sections, the following contents must to be reviewed and the revisions made accordingly.

- i) Have the building occupants received instructions on emergency procedures and when was this information provided to the occupants?
- ii) Are the emergency procedures prominently posted on each floor throughout the building?
- iii) Are the building occupants aware of how they can control fire hazards and reduce fire occurrences in the building?
- iv) Are the supervisory staff identified in the fire safety plan indicating their duties and responsibilities, outlining their alternates in case of absences?
- v) Are the supervisory staff trained prior to assuming responsibility for the fire safety of others and do they participate in the mandatory fire drills?
- vi) Does the fire safety plan contain provisions for the maintenance of building features indicating a schedule that specifies the frequency of conducting the necessary checks, inspections, and tests of all fire safety features provided in the building? Is the schedule followed?
- vii) Does the fire safety plan identify who performs the different types of maintenance, required tests and corrective mea-

asures to determine if required maintenance is being performed?
viii) Are there suitable provisions for implementing alternative measures if the fire equipment is temporarily shut down?
ix) Does the fire safety plan contain adequate schematic drawings outlining the type and operation of fire safety systems provided in the building?
x) Is the fire safety plan in its designated location and readily available to responding firefighters?

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In some cases the fire safety plan will be required to be re-submitted to the fire department for their review and re-approval. Re-submissions are required when changes or additions occur to the inventory of the site materials, including all hazardous materials, flammable/combustible liquids and gases being stored. Building additions, alternations, upgrades to the fire protections system and modification made to the floor plan layout all fall under the re-submission requirements. Lastly, include changes to the ownership of the property or building or the business.

A well-devised fire safety plan, coupled with the training implementation requirements will dramatically increase the speed of occupant evacuation, in addition to providing fire responders with the critical building fundamentals for negotiation of the structure during a fire emergency.

When a fire safety plan (FSP) is properly implemented, it will help to enhance the level of fire safety awareness among occupants in the building. Occupants will be more informed about fire safety procedures and the related information contained in the FSP, which is vital for their survival in the event of fire. The lack of FSP, or failure to implement the provisions of an approved FSP, will be considered a serious violation of the Ontario Fire Code. The fire department normally inspects the building premise to check the standings of the fire and life safety equipment with the owner, or designate, and also determines if the FSP is being implemented properly and whether the owner understands their role and responsibilities for fire safety. Fire safety planning is a key component of every building and the primary goals and objectives are to increase the occupants and public awareness of fire

safety and promote building compliance and meet all applicable fire safety regulations.

Owners and or their building operators are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their buildings comply with the Ontario Fire Code in the development and implementation of a FSP that has been approved by the Chief Fire Official. FSP's are to be reviewed ongoingly as internal floor areas layouts and exit paths may have been altered, emergency contact telephone number may be void and or fire wardens may no longer hold this position, therefore amendments are to be made immediately. Re identifying any occupants that have handicaps and their support structure of evacuation is critical FSP information.

Exercising the fire safety plan will involve training, practice exercises and evaluation. In single tenant facilities, the fire safety plan should become part of the corporate policies and be managed effectively. In multi-tenant facilities, the fire safety plan must be adopted by each tenant and be integrated into the workplace procedures for occupants to follow during a fire emergency incident. Key personnel in each tenant space may require special training or instruction to ensure they can conduct the assigned duties during a fire emergency. Fire drills can be conducted to determine if the procedures and communications are effective. Building individuals have key roles to play during a fire emergency. Everyone working in the facility will require some form of training to become familiar with the established fire safety plan. This could include distribution of the specific procedures and periodic discussion sessions with occupants and tenants to review the procedures, technical training in the use of special equipment if necessary and participation in evacuation drills intended to improve awareness of the egress features provided in the building.

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