



Loss Control Insights

Evacuations

Follow Fire Evacuation Procedures

“Ring the bell, and run like ...,” well, we all know the drill, but let’s take a closer look at fire evacuation procedures. Since any fire can threaten lives, your workplace has an evacuation plan that includes: procedures for reporting a fire, exit route assignments, and procedures to account for employees after the evacuation. As part of the plan, designated employees have been trained to assist in the safe and orderly evacuation.

Reporting a fire is crucial for a safe outcome. Even a small fire should be reported before anyone tries to put it out with a portable fire extinguisher. There’s no guarantee that a fire extinguisher will completely put out the fire. Reporting the fire ensures that help is on the way and everyone can be safely evacuated if necessary.



When using a portable fire extinguisher is expected to put out a small fire, it may be an over-reaction to immediately evacuate the building. Your company policy may be to have someone on stand-by at the fire alarm while the extinguisher is used and employees clear the immediate area.

Pulling a fire alarm sends a loud and clear signal to evacuate the building. The fire alarm can also be triggered if the building’s sprinkler system is activated. If you hear the alarm, stop what you’re doing and evacuate.

In some situations, you may hear verbal instructions over the building’s intercom system instead of a fire alarm. No matter how the message is delivered, take immediate action. Don’t wait to finish your work or gather personal belongings when you hear an evacuation alarm.

Your emergency plan identifies emergency exit routes. Because a fire may block an exit, be ready to follow an alternate route. Your best exit route may not be the same path you normally take to and from your workstation.

If a fire is reported promptly and the evacuation signal is given right away, you probably won’t see or smell smoke as you evacuate. This doesn’t mean that the situation isn’t serious. If you do see or smell smoke, don’t be tempted to stop and try to fight the fire. Your job during an evacuation is to leave the building. This film from a fire safety class shows how smoke and ash rise, and the air is clearer at floor level. If the exit route is smoky, stay low to the floor.

As you evacuate, listen for instructions about safe exit routes or assembly areas. It’s the job of designated “fire wardens” to help you evacuate. You may be asked to close windows and doors behind you as you leave. Don’t take an elevator during an evacuation. It’s not unusual for the power to go out during a fire emergency.

Evacuation procedures aren’t over once you reach a safe area. Move away from the exit to the assembly area. Everyone needs to stay quiet while attendance is taken to account for everyone. You should also listen for instructions in case you need to move to another location. Always stay clear of emergency responders and their equipment. Never go back into the building for any reason before you receive instructions to return to work.

Whether you need to evacuate as part of a training drill or because of a real fire, treat any evacuation as if your life depends on it