

Overland Park Fire Department

Emergency Planning Tips

All businesses should have an emergency plan for evacuation in the event of fire and a protection in place plan in the event of a disaster. Also as important is a plan that will allow you to continue to conduct business as usual as soon as possible after the event. Most businesses are required by code to have a fire evacuation plan in place and to make their employees aware of it. Some are even required to hold fire drills on a regular basis.

Making an emergency plan can be overwhelming if you've never done it. These Emergency Planning Tips and attached forms may help get you started. You may also call our Public Education Department at (913) 895-8400 if you have further questions, concerns, or would like help with planning for emergency evacuation for people with disabilities. We are also available to provide you with on site consultation, free of charge.

To get started, we suggest you answer the following questions:

1. If a fire were to start in my building this minute, what would the occupants most likely do? Which of their actions would be correct and which would not be?
2. Do occupants in my building take fire alarms sounding as a serious situation that requires immediate evacuation response?
3. If a tornado warning were issued for our building, what would the occupants most likely do? Which of their actions would be correct and which would not be? How would we notify the occupants of the impending danger?
4. If the fire department told us we had to remain inside the building, doors and windows closed, HVAC system off for 4 hours, how would we meet the basic needs of our occupants (food, water, fresh air, etc.)?
5. If a major disaster were to hit the area during the workday would the occupants of the building be able to respond to and mitigate small emergencies throughout the building until official help could arrive? (A disaster is an event so large that it taxes the abilities of the emergency services system to respond to all that need them. People in a disaster may be without help from emergency service agencies for hours depending on the size and scope of the disaster.)

6. If someone had a medical emergency in our building, how would the occupants handle it?
7. If someone called in a bomb threat to our building, would the person answering the phone know what to do and what information to gather?
8. If an event happened at our building after hours, who would respond and how would they be contacted?
9. If an event happened at our building overnight, which prohibited the occupants from entering the next day, how could we notify employees and provide information on work status?
10. If we were unable to occupy our building for 2 months after a damaging event, what would we do? Would we relocate, if so where? How soon could we be back up and running? What if our records were damaged?

Of course these are by no means the only questions you should try to answer. Our hope is they give you enough information to get started. As you go through the process you will identify other issues that need to be addressed. Actually an emergency plan is never really finished. Because companies re-locate, floors plans reconfigure and people come and go, your company emergency plan will go through many changes over the years.

Once you have a plan in place then you need to make sure the building occupants understand the plan and their role in it. Next you need to test the plan with drills. We recommend two fire drills and one severe weather drill per year. The fire department is not required to be present at your drills. Just be sure that you notify all the appropriate agencies, the alarm company, other tenants, etc. that you will be having the drill. It is very important to notify the alarm company before you activate the alarm so that the fire department is not dispatched. Also be sure to have someone on hand that understands your alarm system and is capable of resetting it after the drill is over.

If you would like the fire department to be on hand to observe your drill and provide feedback you should schedule it with a Public Education Specialist at (913) 895-8400. Please plan at least two weeks ahead of time. Because of the demands of emergency calls, etc. on duty fire crews are not used for observation of fire drills. Instead members of Prevention and Training Division will be happy to observe your drills, answer your questions and provide feedback.