



Creating a Safer and More Secure World™

High-Rise Building Fire Safety for Building Owners and Managers

In an emergency, there are challenges associated with the evacuation of high-rise buildings¹. Every high-rise building has unique characteristics including design, construction, condition and use. As a result, these fire safety tips highlight only the basics of emergency evacuation.

Proper exits combined with emergency lighting, detection and alarm, and fire sprinkler systems are crucial to occupant safety. It is essential that exit routes are accessible and unobstructed. Local fire and building code officials should be consulted to assist in determining the adequacy of building exits and safety systems.

Advance preparation is critical to the effective evacuation and safety of building occupants.

What should building owners/managers do to help ensure safe evacuation from high-rise buildings²?

- Develop a written building emergency evacuation plan and review it periodically for effectiveness.
- Provide occupant emergency evacuation training.
- Conduct periodic emergency evacuation drills.
- Post evacuation instructions prominently on every floor and emergency numbers on or near all telephones.
- Appoint and train primary and secondary (back-up) floor wardens who will be responsible for sounding alarms and assisting in emergency evacuations.
- Designate gathering places (mustering points) outside of and away from the building for people to go during an evacuation. Such gathering places should be a safe location where people can assemble without interfering with fire fighters and emergency personnel.
- Prevent locked fire exits and blocked halls, doorways or stairwells.
- Install, maintain and regularly test, safety systems such as exit and emergency lighting, fire detection and alarm systems, and fire sprinkler systems.
- Identify building occupants with special needs or disabilities who may need help evacuating and assign one or more people, including back-up personnel, to help them during an emergency.
- Ensure that during off-hour periods, systems are in place to notify, evacuate and account for off-hour building occupants.

What should building owners/managers do when an emergency occurs?

- Activate the building emergency evacuation plan.
- Sound appropriate alarms and instruct occupants to leave the building.
- Summon firefighters, police, and other appropriate emergency response personnel.
- Account for known building occupants at the designated gathering places (mustering points) and immediately notify emergency personnel of any missing person.

¹ The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) defines “high-rise building” as a building greater than 75 feet (25 m) in height, measured from the lowest level of fire department vehicle access to the floor of the highest occupiable story.

² Reference: OSHA Fact Sheet: Evacuating High Rise Buildings, 2003.