



MEMORANDUM

March 11th, 2008

To: All Department Chairs, Directors and Administrative Staff

From: Robert Moss, Director of Environmental Health and Safety

Subject: **Building Alarm Evacuation Procedures**

Attached is the University of Texas at El Paso's Building Alarm Evacuation Procedure. This procedure provides guidance to employees and supervisors in the event of a building evacuation alarm. This procedure should be posted in the admin area of the department and its contents discussed at staff meetings. It is very important that this procedure be read and discussed by all members of the University community.

As a department head the safety of those within the department is in your hands. It is crucial that you take the time to review this procedure with your staff. You need to set the tone for compliance. Each and every employee needs to understand that, in the event of an alarm, they are expected to proceed quickly through the nearest building exit and then to your predetermined meeting place. This meeting place should be far enough from the building, preferably across the street or lawn area. At that pre-determined location they can anticipate that either you or a designated emergency warden selected by you will make every effort to account for all the department staff. So it is important that they follow your directions in this matter. Be prepared to answer questions and make decisions relative to your department. You may assign this responsibility to an emergency warden selected by you or a committee of the staff to promote safe practices in your department and building areas. If you assign this responsibility in your department, please notify our office (ext. 7124) of the designee.

Fill in the appropriate blanks in the attached procedure before posting it. Once complete it will constitute your department's building evacuation plan and will be subject to inspection by EH&S and/or Campus PD. If you require any further clarification of this procedure or the expectations placed upon you as a leader of your staff, please do not hesitate to call either the Environmental Health and Safety department (7124) or the Campus Police Station (5611). Either can assist you in this matter.



Building Alarm Evacuation Procedure

Never ignore a building alarm signal, even if you have reason to believe that it may be false.

Prepare Yourself

The University's building alarm systems are tested and maintained to afford building occupants the best possible warning in case of an emergency. Before an alarm sounds, take note of the following:

1. Always identify at least two evacuation routes and exits in case of an emergency. Exit Signs in the corridors clearly indicate the way. The route you normally take may not be accessible in an emergency so be prepared with an alternate.
2. Identify the locations of the fire alarm pull stations so that you may sound an alarm in case of fire or other emergency. These are usually located by exits and entry into stairways.
3. Observe how to operate the pull station. They are quite simple. Some have plastic covers that have an alarm that sounds when it is opened. These alarms operate only at the pull station and are designed to reduce nuisance alarms. Ignore this alarm and pull down on the fire alarm handle inside.
4. Whenever the alarms are activated, observe the sound. Learn to recognize it as an indication of an emergency requiring evacuation.
5. Never prop open the stairwell doors. They must be fully closed in order to keep smoke and heat out and to maintain a safe passageway out of the building for building occupants. Report stairwell doors that do not self-close and latch so that they may be repaired. Your department will not be charged for repairs to promote safety.
6. Your supervisor has identified _____ as a safe area away from the building where your department will gather in an emergency. Everyone must be accounted for at that location. If you haven't been told where the departmental gathering point is – ask the supervisor or the designated emergency warden, _____.
7. If there are sensitive items within your space, keep them locked away when not in use. You may not have time to store them in an emergency.

When an alarm sounds

In the event that an alarm sounds in the building, it's time to get out. You don't have to see or smell smoke to know this. The following steps should be taken as you prepare to leave your area:

1. Close any open windows. Close the door to your office or room when leaving. This will help slow a fire by reducing the oxygen that feeds a fire. Also, closing your door will reduce the probability of smoke ruining the contents of your room.

Don't lock the door. Firefighters must gain entry to all rooms when fire occurs to verify that everyone has escaped.

2. If on an upper floor use the stairs to get out. **DO NOT USE THE ELEVATORS!** In a fire situation an elevator shaft can act like a chimney flue, filling with hot smoke, gases and flames. Also, the elevator control panel or the building electrical system may become disabled due to the emergency. This could trap you in the elevator and place you at risk of fire, heat, or smoke inhalation.
3. Exit the building and proceed to the departmental gathering point away from the building. Do not block driveways or parking lots. Emergency equipment will need access.
4. Report to your supervisor or the designee at the departmental gathering point. Do not wander off until you have been accounted for. Emergency crews may lose precious minutes if they must search the building for you so don't forget to report the department gathering point.
5. Do not re-enter the building until it has been declared safe by Campus Police or the city fire department. No other individual should make that call.

And if you hear an alarm remember, just because you can't see or smell smoke doesn't mean that there isn't an emergency. There may still be a fire or some other emergency requiring exit from the building. Often fire alarm pull stations may be activated to evacuate the building for other emergencies, such as a chemical emergency, gas leak, medical emergency, or even to draw attention to a crime in progress.

Do not ignore an alarm signal, even if you have reason to believe it may be false.

If fire starts in your area

Remember to close the door to the fire area, activate the fire alarm by pulling down on the fire alarm pull station lever, evacuate the building, do not use elevators, and if caught in smoke, get down low. The clearest air is closer to the floor. Finally, call 911 from a safe telephone.

If you become trapped, go to a window and wave something that will catch the attention of those below. If a telephone is available, call 911 and be prepared to give a detailed description of your area. Remember, the rescuers are not as familiar with campus buildings as you are.

Persons with disabilities

We all have an obligation to look out for each other. Each department should develop procedures for evacuating those students, staff, or faculty who have disabilities. Persons with hearing impairment should be alerted when an alarm sounds and those with visual impairments will need our help in exiting a building. Notify emergency personnel when a person with disabilities remained behind in a designated Area of Refuge at an elevator landing or a stairwell.

If you have a disability that could impair your options in an emergency you should make every effort to plan your exit ahead of time. Make a point to become familiar with the building. Stairwells should be checked out, taking note of landings and whether they may be used as an area of refuge. Locations of exits, telephones, signs and fire alarm pull stations should be noted. Remind your co-workers and others you frequently visit that you may need their assistance in case of an emergency. **When an emergency does occur, request help. Don't wait for someone to offer it.**