



COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

EMERGENCY PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS GROUP E OCCUPANCY

Emergency planning and preparedness requirements focus on helping people know what to do during a fire or other emergency. While buildings are designed with safety features such as sprinklers, fire-resistant construction, and clearly marked exits, these systems work best when occupants are prepared to respond quickly and correctly. The Fire Code requires organizations to develop emergency plans, provide training, and practice fire, evacuation, and lockdown procedures on a regular basis. Preparing occupants in advance reduces confusion, improves safety during an emergency, and helps first responders do their jobs more effectively. The following are requirements for Emergency Planning and Preparedness for Group E Occupancies per Chapter 4 of the 2025 California Fire Code.

FIRE SAFETY AND FIRE EVACUATION PLANS

An approved fire safety and evacuation plan shall be prepared and maintained for all Group E occupancies. (CFC 403.4)

Fire evacuation plans

Fire evacuation plans shall include the following:

1. Emergency egress or escape routes and whether evacuation of the building is to be complete by selected floors or areas only or with a defend-in-place response.
2. Procedures for employees who must remain to operate critical equipment before evacuating.
3. Procedures for the use of elevators to evacuate the building where occupant evacuation elevators complying with Section 3008 of the California Building Code are provided.
4. Procedures for assisted rescue for persons unable to use the general means of egress unassisted.
5. Procedures for accounting for employees and occupants after evacuation has been completed.
6. Identification and assignment of personnel responsible for rescue or emergency medical aid.
7. The preferred and any alternative means of notifying occupants of a fire or emergency.
8. The preferred and any alternative means of reporting fires and other emergencies to the fire department or designated emergency response organization.
9. Identification and assignment of personnel who can be contacted for further information or explanation of duties under the plan.
10. A description of the emergency voice/alarm communication system alert tone and preprogrammed voice messages, where provided. (CFC 404.2.1)

Fire safety plans.

Fire safety plans shall include the following:

1. The procedure for reporting a fire or other emergency.
2. The life safety strategy including the following:
 - 2.1. Procedures for notifying occupants, including areas with a private mode alarm system.
 - 2.2. Procedures for occupants under a defend-in-place response.
 - 2.3. Procedures for evacuating occupants, including those who need evacuation assistance.
3. Site plans indicating the following:
 - 3.1. The occupancy assembly point.
 - 3.2. The locations of fire hydrants.
 - 3.3. The normal routes of fire department vehicle access.
4. Floor plans identifying the locations of the following:

5. Site plans indicating the following:
 - 4.1. Exits.
 - 4.2. Primary evacuation routes.
 - 4.3. Secondary evacuation routes.
 - 4.4. Accessible egress routes.
 - 4.4.1. Areas of refuge.
 - 4.4.2. Exterior areas for assisted rescue.
 - 4.5. Refuge areas associated with smoke barriers and horizontal exits.
 - 4.6. Manual fire alarm boxes.
 - 4.7. Portable fire extinguishers.
 - 4.8. Occupant-use hose stations.
 - 4.9. Fire alarm annunciators and controls.
6. A list of major fire hazards associated with the normal use and occupancy of the premises, including maintenance and housekeeping procedures.
7. Identification and assignment of personnel responsible for maintenance of systems and equipment installed to prevent or control fires.
8. Identification and assignment of personnel responsible for maintenance, housekeeping, and controlling fuel hazard sources. (CFC 404.2.2)

Emergency pre-fire planning

Each school principal, district superintendent or day nursery manager shall, in cooperation with the enforcing agency, prepare procedures to be followed in case of fire or other emergency. They should include the following:

1. Posting of the telephone number of the fire department in the office and/or at the main switchboard.
2. Assignment of a responsible person to call the fire department upon notification of any fire or activation of the alarm system for any reason other than fire drills.
3. Posting in a conspicuous place in each classroom or assembly area a plan showing paths of travel to evacuate the room in case of emergency and including an alternate route.
4. Posting in each classroom instructions to be followed by the teacher. These should include:
 - 4.1. Maintaining of order during evacuation.
 - 4.2. Removal of roll call book and calling of roll when designated evacuation area is reached. (CFC 403.4.1.1)

EMERGENCY EVACUATION DRILLS

Occupant participation

Emergency fire and evacuation drills shall involve the actual evacuation of occupants to a selected assembly point and shall provide occupants with experience in exiting through required exits. (CFC 405.2)

Frequency

Every person and public officer managing, controlling or in charge of any public, private or parochial school shall cause the fire alarm signal to be sounded upon the discovery of fire. Every person and public officer managing, controlling or in charge of any public, private or parochial school, other than a two-year community college, shall cause the fire alarm signal to be sounded not less than once every calendar month at the elementary and intermediate levels, and not less than twice yearly at the secondary level. A fire drill shall be held at the secondary level not less than twice every school year. (CCR 19 § 3.13)

First emergency evacuation drill

The first emergency evacuation drill of each school year shall be conducted within 10 days of the beginning of classes. (CFC 403.4.2)

Time of Day

Emergency evacuation drills shall be conducted at different hours of the day or evening, during the changing of classes, when the school is at assembly, during the recess or gymnastic periods, or during other times to avoid distinction between drills and actual fires. (CFC 403.4.3)

Assembly points

Outdoor assembly areas shall be designated and shall be located a safe distance from the building being evacuated so as to avoid interference with fire department operations. The assembly areas shall be arranged to keep each class separate to provide accountability of all individuals. (CFC 403.4.4)

Assembly area shall be located on the same lot at least 50 feet away from any building and be a size to accommodate not less than 5 square feet for each person. The area shall be provided with a safe and unobstructed path of travel from the building and shall be permanently maintained and identified as a safe dispersal area. (CFC 1028.5)

Leadership

Responsibility for the planning and conduct of drills shall be assigned to competent persons designated to exercise leadership. (CFC 405.4)

Time

Drills shall be held at unexpected times and under varying conditions to simulate the unusual conditions that occur in case of fire. (CFC 405.5)

Recordkeeping

Records shall be maintained of required emergency evacuation drills and include the following information:

1. Identity of the person conducting the drill.
2. Date and time of the drill.
3. Notification method used.
4. Employees on duty and participating.
5. Number of occupants evacuated.
6. Special conditions simulated.
7. Problems encountered.
8. Weather conditions when occupants were evacuated.
9. Time required to accomplish complete evacuation. (CFC 405.6)

Notification

Where required by the fire code official, prior notification of emergency evacuation drills shall be given to the fire code official. (CFC 405.7)

Initiation

Where a fire alarm system is provided, emergency evacuation drills shall be initiated by activating the fire alarm system. (CFC 405.8)

Accountability

As building occupants arrive at the assembly point, efforts shall be made to determine if all occupants have been successfully evacuated or have been accounted for. (CFC 405.9)