

SEATTLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Information Bulletin #982



High Rise Fire Safety Requirements

The City of Seattle classifies a high rise as any building that has occupied floors 75 feet or higher above Fire Department access. High rise buildings, because of their height and the large number of people they may contain, are required to follow a number of fire safety regulations relating to preparation and training of people within the building. These requirements are contained in Chapter 4 and Chapter 93 of the 2003 Seattle Fire Code.

Fire Safety Director

Each high rise building is required to have a Fire Safety Director, and Alternate, appointed by the building owner. The Fire Safety Director is the individual responsible to oversee the preparedness and initial response of a building's fire and life safety systems and building occupants to a fire alarm.

Their responsibility is to prevent, prepare for and manage possible fire emergencies until the Fire Department arrives to assume control of the situation. The primary action of the Fire Safety Director during a fire emergency is to report to the building emergency control center (panel) to direct the building's emergency response. In addition, the Fire Safety Director meets the responding fire company to advise them on the status of the alarm and the building's fire protection systems.

Resources for Fire Safety Directors include the publication *High Rise Emergency Handbook*, as well as a half day seminar on high rise fire safety issues. Both are offered free of charge. Call 386-1337 for more information or on the internet at <http://www.seattle.gov/fire>.

Emergency Operations Plan

Each high rise building in Seattle is required to have a written document that details all action by building occupants and staff during a fire emergency. This document is called the

Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). In addition to detailing building emergency response, the EOP serves as an information resource to the Fire Department during an emergency. The EOP also documents the procedures, frequency and record keeping for confidence testing of all equipment and systems which must operate during a fire emergency.

All new high rise buildings are required to have an Emergency Operations Plan reviewed and approved by the Fire Department before final occupancy. One copy of the approved EOP should be located at or near the Emergency Control Center of the building. One copy of the plan should be submitted to the Fire Department. All copies of the plan should be kept current and reviewed regularly as specified in the plan.

Emergency Evacuation Drills

The Seattle Fire Code requires that all high rise buildings conduct emergency evacuation drills on an annual basis, in accordance with the building's Emergency Operations Plan. Additional information on high rise drills can be found in Information Bulletin #963, *High Rise Building Emergency Evacuation Drills*.

Floor Wardens

Additional members of the high rise building response team are the assigned floor wardens. Floor wardens are volunteers recruited from among the building tenants. Their role is to help with the evacuation of building occupants. A roster of floor warden names should be maintained in the building EOP. There is an exception to the requirement for floor wardens. Residential condominiums and apartments not employing staff are not required to have floor wardens, although they are strongly encouraged.

Floor wardens should participate in training on a regular basis, at least once a year. They should also be involved in your building's emergency evacuation drills. Training assistance, in the form of lesson plans, handouts, and videos, is available from the Seattle Fire Department's Public Education Office at 386-1337.

Controlled Evacuation

Evacuation of a high rise building during a fire emergency can be a major undertaking. For the majority of high rise buildings, the fire alarm only rings on those floors in the direct vicinity of the fire. This allows those individuals who are at most direct risk to exit the area as quickly as possible. This is called a controlled evacuation. The reasons behind a controlled evacuation are:

- Evacuating all floors at once may create serious back-ups in the stairwells. This may not only impede prompt exiting from the building, but also slow the access of firefighters to the fire.
- Stairwell pressurization could be lost if all doors were open at the same time.
- There is no immediate need to evacuate more people than are directly threatened.

The following controlled evacuation procedures are recommended for most buildings:

- The alarm must sound on a minimum of the fire floor and the floor above. You may add floors to this alarm sequence at your discretion, but you may not go below the minimum.
- Standard evacuation instructions are to exit the floor using the stairwells, go down four (4) floors, and re-enter the building. Wait for further instructions. Often the easiest location to wait is the elevator lobby.
- A very important point to be made with these instructions is that you should **never enter onto a floor where the alarm is sounding**. If it is, continue down the stairs to a non-alarm location.
- The bottom five floors evacuate to the outside of the building when they hear the alarm and go to the designated outside meeting place.

Related Information

Information Bulletins

- #963..... High Rise Building Emergency Evacuation Drills
- #971..... Confidence Testing
- #2000-1 .. Emergency Operations Plan

Self-Guided Training Programs (3-day loan)

- Evacuation Planning
 - High Rise Floor Wardens
 - Workplace Fire Safety
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