

Seattle Permits

—part of a multi-departmental series on City services & permitting

Fire Safety and Evacuation Plans

Updated January 2025

Chapter 4 of the 2021 Seattle Fire Code requires that fire safety and evacuation plans be developed for a variety of occupancies. This bulletin outlines the general requirements of these plans. Additional provisions are also required for some occupancies.

Occupancies Requiring Plans

Group A	Assemblies with more than 100 persons (except not required for places used exclusively for religious worship with occupant load of less than 2,000 and buildings containing both a Group A occupancy and an atrium).
Group B	Business occupancies having an occupant load of 500 or more persons or more than 100 persons above or below the lowest level of exit discharge. Also, buildings having an ambulatory care facility.
Group E	Educational.
Group F	Factory/industrial buildings having an occupant load of 500 or more persons or more than 100 persons above or below the lowest level of exit discharge, or used for pallet manufacturing and recycling facilities.
Group H	Hazardous processes.
Group I	Institutions such as hospitals, care facilities, corrections facilities.
Group M	Retail stores and markets having an occupant load of 500 or more persons or more than 100 persons above or below the lowest level of exit discharge.
Group R-1	Residential (transient) such as hotels, boarding houses.
Group R-2	College and university buildings and

Assisted living and residential care facilities licensed by the State.

Additional occupancies or uses which require plans are:

- High rise buildings.
- Covered malls exceeding 50,000 square feet in aggregate floor area.
- Underground buildings.
- Buildings with an atrium and having an occupancy in group A, E or M.
- Buildings with high-piled storage.
- Structures under construction, alteration and demolition (see section 403.11.6 of the 2018 Seattle Fire Code for requirements).

Fire Safety and 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 or, where approved, by selected floors or areas only.
2. Procedures for employees who must remain to operate critical equipment before evacuating.
3. Procedures for assisted rescue of persons unable to use the general means of egress unassisted.
4. Procedures to account for employees and occupants after evacuation has been completed.
5. Identification and assignment of personnel responsible for rescue or emergency medical aid.
6. The preferred and any alternative means of notifying occupants of a fire or emergency.
7. The preferred and any alternative means of reporting fires and other emergencies to the fire department or designated emergency response organization.
8. Identification and assignment of personnel who can be contacted for further information or explanation



of duties under the plan.

9. A description of the emergency voice/alarm communication system alert tone and pre-programmed voice messages, where provided.
10. Procedures for the use of elevators to evacuate the building where occupant evacuation elevators complying with Section 403.6.2.6 of the Seattle Building Code are installed.

Fire safety plans shall include the following:

1. The procedure for reporting a fire or emergency.
2. The life safety strategy and procedures for notifying, relocating or evacuating occupants, including occupants who need assistance.
3. Site plans indicating:
 - Occupancy assembly point.
 - Locations of fire hydrants.
 - Normal routes of fire department vehicle access.
4. Floor plans identifying the locations of:
 - Exits.
 - Primary evacuation routes.
 - Secondary evacuation routes.
 - Accessible egress routes.
 - Areas of refuge.
 - Exterior areas for assisted rescue.
 - Manual fire alarm boxes.
 - Portable fire extinguishers.
 - Occupant-use hose stations.
 - Fire alarm annunciators and controls.
5. A list of major fire hazards associated with the normal use and occupancy of the premises, including maintenance and housekeeping procedures.
6. Identification and assignment of personnel responsible for maintenance of systems and equipment installed to prevent or control fires.
7. Identification and assignment of personnel responsible for maintenance, housekeeping and controlling fuel hazard sources.

Emergency Evacuation Drills

Occupancies that are required to complete a fire safety

and evacuation plan are also required to conduct emergency evacuation drills to practice the plan. The schedule on which these drills should be conducted is:

Group	Frequency	Participation
A	Quarterly	Employees
B	Annually	All Occupants
Note: Occ. load >500, or >100 persons above or below the lowest level of exit discharge. For outpatient clinics, participation is from employees only.		
B - Ambulatory	Quarterly on each shift	Employees
E	Monthly	All occupants
Note: Daycares co-located on Group E campuses participate in emergency drills.		
F	Annually	Employees
I	Quarterly on each shift	Employees: I-2 and I-3 All occupants: I-1 and I-4
R-1	Quarterly on each shift	Employees
R-2	Quarterly on each shift	Employees
Note: Group R-2 college and university buildings, all occupants. Note: Boarding homes, group homes and residential treatment facilities license by WA State: meet requirements for I-1 occupancies.		
High Rise	Annually	Employees
Note: Jail inmates, hospital patients, hotel guests and occupants of apartment or residential condominium are not required to participate unless they are also a member of the high rise building staff.		

Plan Maintenance

Fire safety and evacuation plans should be reviewed or updated annually or as necessitated by changes in staff assignments, occupancy, or the physical arrangement of the building.

Make the Plan Available

Fire safety and evacuation plans should be kept available in the workplace for reference and review by employees, and copies should be furnished to the Fire Department upon request.

The fire safety and evacuation plans should be distributed to building tenants by the building owner. Tenants should distribute to their employees those parts of the fire safety plan that affect the employees' actions in the event of a fire emergency.

Record Keeping

Records of emergency evacuation drills should be maintained and should include:

1. Identity of the person conducting the drill.
2. Date and time of the drill.
3. Notification method used.
4. Staff members participating.
5. Number of occupants participating.
6. Special conditions simulated.
7. Problems encountered and corrective actions taken.
8. Weather conditions when occupants evacuated.
9. Time required to accomplish complete evacuation.

In buildings that have a fire alarm system, emergency evacuation drills should be initiated by activating the fire alarm system. Buildings whose alarm systems are monitored by an offsite monitoring company should notify the company immediately prior to the drill to prevent a Seattle Fire Department response. When the drill is completed, notify the monitoring company that the building has returned to normal operations.

Employee Training

Employees should be trained in the fire emergency procedures described in the fire evacuation plan. Employees should receive training in the contents of the fire evacuation plan and their duties as part of their new employee orientation and at least annually thereafter. Records should be kept which document this training.

Employee training should include the following:

- Fire prevention training—information on the fire hazards to which they are exposed and instruction in how to prevent fires.
- Becoming familiar with the fire alarm and evacuation signals, their duties in the event of an alarm, evacuation routes, areas of refuge, assembly areas, and procedures for evacuation.
- Any employees assigned firefighting duties should be trained to know the locations and proper use of portable fire extinguishers, and the protective clothing or equipment required for its safe and proper

use. Additional requirements may apply from other regulating agencies.

- Employees with other special roles, including floor warden or fire safety director, should also receive specialized training so they can perform their duties effectively in case of an emergency.

Related Information For more information, please see the following SFD Client Assistance Memorandums:

#5963 High Rise Emergency Evacuation Drills

#5982 High Rise Fire Emergency Planning Requirements

#5032 Fire Inspections for Nightlife and Entertainment Venues

#5072 Fire Emergency Plans for Marinas, Piers and Floats

SFD CAMs can be accessed here: <http://www.seattle.gov/fire/business-services/fire-code-and-fire-safety-documents#clientassistancememos>

Additional resources for developing fire emergency plans, conducting fire drills, and training staff are available on the SFD Public Education pages: www.seattle.gov/fire/safety-