

Evacuation

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Evacuation may be necessary due to various emergencies such as fire, explosion, chemical leaks, structural faults, or equipment failures. Generally, evacuations fall into two categories:

1. **Closed Sites:** These are sites like office towers where most occupants are regulars and are familiar with the evacuation plans. Special events might occur occasionally, but the majority of the time, security personnel deal with individuals who have received evacuation training.
2. **Open Sites:** These include venues hosting events such as concerts, public gatherings, trade shows, and similar activities. Here, security personnel encounter large numbers of people unfamiliar with the premises, exits, evacuation routes, and site hazards. This requires a more active role from security staff in guiding and assisting individuals during an evacuation.

For both categories, security personnel should be well-versed in the site's emergency evacuation procedures. These procedures should be posted and distributed to all occupants. Security staff should familiarize themselves with the location of all fire exits, fire alarm activation devices, fire extinguishers, emergency equipment, and assembly areas.

Key Points for Security Personnel:

- **Understand Evacuation Procedures:** Ensure you know the specific evacuation procedures for your site.
- **Identify Exits and Equipment:** Be aware of all fire exits, alarm devices, extinguishers, and emergency equipment locations.
- **Assist Occupants:** Provide guidance and assistance, especially at open sites where occupants are unfamiliar with the premises.
- **Distribute Information:** Make sure evacuation procedures are shared with all site occupants.
- **Prepare for Emergencies:** Regularly review and practice the evacuation procedures to be prepared for any emergency situation.

By being prepared and knowledgeable, security personnel can effectively manage evacuations and ensure the safety of all occupants.

General Recommendations

1. **Stay Composed:** In a crisis, maintaining a calm and confident demeanor is crucial. People will look to you for leadership and guidance. A Security Guard who appears

unsure or lacks confidence cannot effectively manage the situation or provide the necessary support to those in need.

2. Emergency Evacuation:

- When an emergency alarm sounds, all individuals must evacuate the building immediately.
- Follow any specified emergency protocols from the security company or site owner/operator, which may include contacting a building manager or supervisor.
- Actions to take during evacuation:
 - Shut down hazardous operations.
 - Assist disabled persons to evacuate.
 - Close doors and windows in the area where the fire or hazard started.
 - Use the nearest, safest exit to leave the building.
 - Consider the location of hazardous or flammable materials, blocked passageways, and non-functioning exits.
 - Do not use elevators; use stairwells instead.
 - Close and lock doors behind you if possible, unless others are following.
 - Feel doors for heat before opening them. If a door is hot, do not open it; find an alternative exit.
 - Avoid smoke-filled or hazardous areas unless there is no other option.
 - Move to a safe location away from the building after evacuating.
 - Go to designated assembly areas for headcounts and ensure everyone has evacuated safely. Inform police and fire officials about anyone who has not evacuated.
 - Ensure evacuees and bystanders do not block fire lanes, exits, walkways, streets, or doorways. They should remain in the assembly area until given further instructions by police, fire, or security personnel.

3. If You Are Trapped:

- Keep the door closed and seal all cracks around doors, windows, and ventilation grills with wet cloths, clothing, or towels if possible.
- Call 911 to report your location if a phone is available.
- Signal for help by hanging something out of a window, such as clothing or a flag, to alert emergency personnel to your position.
- If smoke enters the room, open a window to release it. If smoke comes in from outside, close the window.
- Tie a wet cloth around your nose and mouth to filter out smoke, and stay close to the floor where the air is cleaner.

Evacuation Plans

Evacuation plans are essential written documents outlining the available exit routes from a location and detailing the expected actions of personnel, including security staff, in response to an alarm or evacuation order.

A comprehensive evacuation plan should include:

- Provisions for individuals with disabilities (mobility, visual, or hearing impairments);
- Consideration of hazardous, flammable, or volatile substances on or near the premises;
- Procedures for securing sensitive or valuable items;
- Designated assembly areas post-evacuation and methods to account for all personnel.

Familiarity with the evacuation plan is crucial for all site occupants, achieved through practice drills and employee orientations.

Evacuation for Persons with Disabilities

During most emergency evacuations, elevators are not functional, presenting significant challenges for individuals with mobility, vision, and other disabilities. These needs must be considered in any evacuation plan.

Persons with disabilities may require assistance to evacuate. They should inform someone on site about their need for help during an evacuation. A "buddy" system is recommended, where a designated person assists them. The "buddy" should be aware of any specific assistance needed, such as hearing alarms, guidance during evacuation, or mobility issues. Initially, the "buddy" should locate the person needing help, exit the building, and inform security or emergency personnel outside that assistance is needed for someone in a specific location.

If a person with a disability is alone, they should call 911 to inform responders of their location and need for help or the assembly area they are heading to. Emergency personnel trained in evacuation assistance will then help the person evacuate.

- **Mobility Impairments:** Individuals with partial mobility might be able to navigate stairs and other obstacles with or without help. In imminent danger, they should wait for the majority of traffic to clear to avoid panic. If there is no immediate threat, they may stay at a designated location until emergency personnel arrive.
- **Hearing Impairments:** Some sites have flashing strobe lights and alarm sirens to alert hearing-impaired individuals. If such mechanisms are unavailable, others must inform hearing-impaired individuals of the emergency.
- **Visual Impairments:** The emergency alarm sound should alert visually impaired persons. They may need guidance along unfamiliar evacuation routes.

Evacuation Considerations

- **Horizontal Evacuation:** Move occupants a safe distance from the danger zone. For instance, if one wing of a building is on fire and total evacuation is impossible, move occupants to the farthest possible safe area within the building.
- **Vertical Evacuation:** Use stairwells for evacuation whenever possible. Individuals with disabilities may need assistance or choose to join the general evacuation. Elevators should generally not be used.

- **Stay in a Place of Refuge:** If evacuation is impossible, individuals should seek refuge in a safe room with an exterior window, telephone, sprinkler system, and a door that can be closed. They should call 911, providing their names, location, and the nature of the emergency. If phone lines fail, signals can be sent from the window using visible objects to attract attention. Block cracks around doors and ventilation ducts with a wet cloth to prevent smoke or fumes from entering the refuge.