

4.1 Fire emergencies

Even though an emergency situation may seem remote in your house, it can happen.

All houses must have up-to-date Emergency Procedures and Evacuation Plans. It is imperative that all staff (and people with a disability where practicable) fully understand what to do when dealing with an emergency situation.

Supervisors are to make sure all staff are familiar with the Emergency Procedures for their house, and that regular evacuation exercises are conducted. Each staff member should participate in a minimum of two evacuation exercises each year. There are many types of emergencies that you could be confronted with. There may be a fire, a medical alert, a gas leak, bomb threat or intruders. You should consider developing procedures to cover all these emergencies and any others that may affect your house.

This section of the self-paced package is intended to assist you in understanding your Emergency Procedures and Evacuation Plans for your house with emphasis on fire emergencies and evacuation.

The Emergency Procedures developed for your house should be simple to use and understand.

It is vital that staff realise that their own safety and that of others, should be their primary concern. This is best achieved by evacuation of the house first, before any attempt is made to extinguish the fire. Where there is a smouldering small fire or a fire on the stove, actions such as turning off the power / heat may create extra time to evacuate and reduce the risk of the fire becoming larger, however these actions should not be taken if life is at risk.

Fire Safety Principle:

The Department regards life safety of people with a disability and its staff as a high priority. To achieve this principle, the evacuation of all occupants is the priority over the extinguishment of the fire. The installed sprinkler system is designed to stop and suppress the spread of fire throughout the house.

Reference: Capital Development Guideline series 7.4 Fire Risk Management, section 5.44 Emergency Response.

4.2 Considerations for people with a disability

When practising Emergency Evacuation Procedures, you should take into consideration the mobility capabilities of people in the house, along with any medications which may impair their ability to evacuate.

Consider bedrooms close to exit doors of the house for people who are totally dependent upon assistance during evacuation.

The order in which people should be evacuated is as follows:

1. Mobile and capable to evacuate themselves. First group evacuated.
2. People that can be evacuated with little assistance. Second group evacuated.
3. People that are totally dependent upon assistance. Third group evacuated.

The reasons for this order of evacuation is to remove the maximum number of people from the home as quickly as possible.

Remember, the safety of you and others depends upon a swift and orderly evacuation of the house in an emergency.

Task 4: Discuss with your supervisor the possible evacuation order of people, subject to their room placement.

Task 5: Discuss with the people who live in the house (in the presence of your supervisor), what the fire evacuation plan is.

The following will need to be considered when practising Emergency Evacuation Procedures:

- The types of emergencies that may occur in your house, that will affect all occupants.
- How people will be alerted to an emergency situation.
- In an emergency, evacuate all persons from immediate danger to a safer location. Moving people out of a room on fire and closing the door can achieve this.
- The number of staff likely to be on duty at different times.
- Ensure all rooms and areas have been checked for people.
- Location of the telephone and if 0-000 (0 needs to be dialled first to get an outside line, then the usual 000 needs to be dialled) can be programmed into it for a 'quick' dial.
- Calling the emergency services on 0-000 to inform them of the emergency.
- Always close the door when leaving a room after it has been checked.
- Emergency exit from each room of the house, distance to outside doors and escape through windows.
- Security devices on doors and windows.
- Keep the route to your assembly area free from obstruction such as locked gates and cars.
- Establish two evacuation assembly areas. This is important because you may not be able to use one assembly area due to the nature of the emergency or the weather conditions.
- Consider access to your building and the location of emergency vehicles when they arrive. Ensure your assembly areas are well away from these areas.
- Consider the welfare of people with a disability during an emergency evacuation and how it should be managed. This includes medication and medical instructions.
- Include evacuation exercises as part of any ongoing training and for any new staff.
- If confronted with smoke, crawl low to the ground. Close doors quickly when exiting rooms to prevent smoke travel.

A person's response in an emergency is often difficult to predict. Their behaviour can change due to a change in routine – evacuation at night, bedtime – effects of heat and smoke, and the confusion of having a number of different people (emergency services) in their home.

The circumstances of the emergency may frighten and confuse some people and they may need intensive care, support and supervision.

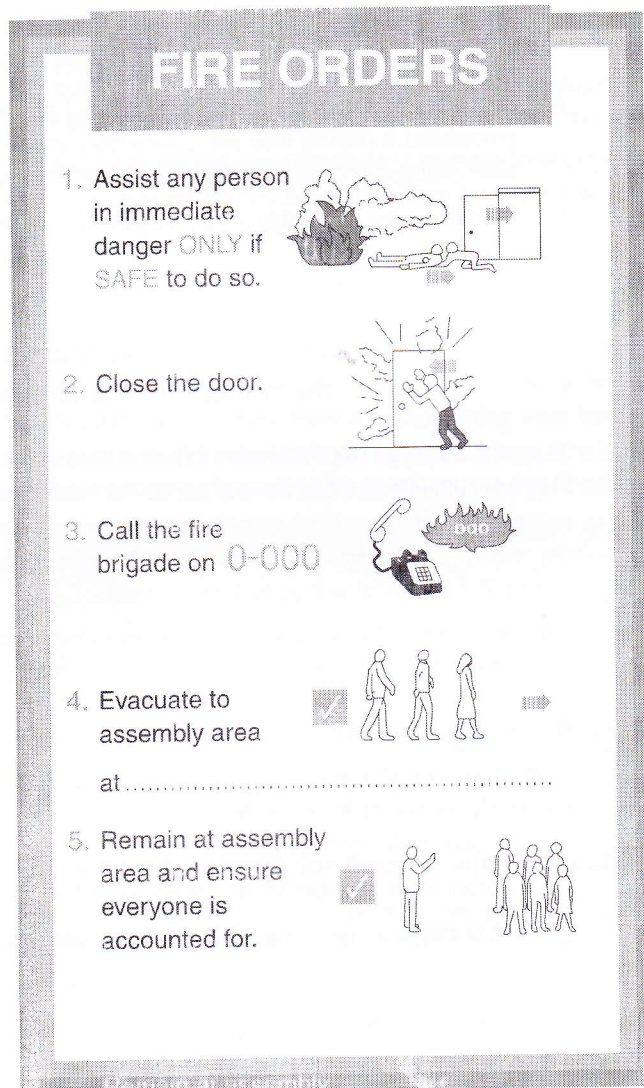
The number of staff on duty will vary between each different house. It is essential to discuss with your supervisor what the roles will be of each staff member and of emergency services.

4.3 Procedures for fire

During a fire emergency, it is vital that all staff are able to respond immediately to ensure the safety of everyone.

The use of Standard Fire Orders will achieve a uniform approach in all houses. Please refer to the Standard Fire Order:

Figure 24: Standard Fire Orders



In the event of a fire related emergency, staff should:

- 1. Assist anyone in immediate danger.** Staff should at all times consider their own safety before taking any action and consider what hazards may exist in the room.
- 2. Close the door.** This will prevent the spread of smoke and fire to other points of the house. Remember smoke is the biggest killer in a fire. By preventing smoke spread, you will gain more time to evacuate the house.

3. **Call the brigade.** Ring the Fire Brigade on 0-000 and give the following information:

- Name (of person making call)
- Name of house, address (with suburb/state)
- Nearest cross road
- House is for people with a disabilities and number of people
- Type of emergency
- Indication if anyone is trapped inside

Note: If there are other staff in the house, they must also be notified

4. **Evacuate to assembly area.** You will have 2 assembly areas in your emergency procedures, a primary area and a secondary area. A secondary area is used when wind direction or other considerations do not allow you to use the primary area.

5. **Remain at the assembly area and ensure everybody is accounted for.** This is vital to ensure that everyone is safely out of the house. No one should be allowed to leave the assembly area until allowed by emergency service personnel.

Under NO circumstances should anyone re-enter the house once it is evacuated.

These are the basic steps that need to be included in the event of a Fire Emergency. They are both effective and flexible. You do not need to follow Standard Fire Orders in the numerical order. Depending upon the situation you are faced with, you may need to alter the steps to suit the situation. Follow these steps and you can quickly evacuate everyone and notify the Fire Brigade as early as possible.

Fire Orders should be displayed in a prominent location near the front door of the house and in the office area where applicable.

4.4 Evacuation plans

Evacuation plans should be drawn up specifically for your house. These plans should accurately display the layout of the house and be in an easy to read format (see figure 25). The plan should clearly show the following:

1. Location of all installed firefighting equipment; ie fire extinguishers and fire blanket
2. Exit points from the house, assembly areas, both primary and secondary;
3. The way out of every room, including windows if appropriate.
4. Location of smoke alarms.
5. Sprinkler control valve assembly.
6. Gas and electricity isolation points.
7. Evacuation pack location (refer to 4.10).

The symbols used to indicate these points should be easily identifiable. When the plans have been completed, they should be displayed alongside the Fire Orders. An example of an Evacuation Plan has been drawn up so staff can see what format should take and what information is needed.