



Conducting Emergency Drills

Emergency drills are an effective technique for preparing YMCAs for stressful situations and ensuring that crises are handled effectively. Many YMCAs have reduced the injuries and chaos that can accompany an emergency because they have been prepared through their drill program.

Drills should be run at least every quarter, including a full evacuation drill at least twice a year. The best times to run an evacuation drill are when the weather permits, but allows enough time to pass where people will need the training; every October and April works well. In some areas, such as child care, the department is required by the local jurisdiction to run evacuation drills every month. Check with authorities to determine which drills must be done and how frequently.

Get Local Officials Involved

In any situation, emergency personnel should review all emergency procedures. They should also be invited to participate in and observe the drill to ensure that the staff is following standards. YMCAs that have involved their areas' emergency medical services with at least one drill annually have enhanced their emergency capabilities and fostered strong relationships in their communities. When conducting a drill the YMCA should always remember to notify the local EMS prior to activating any alarms. All drill procedures should be documented and distributed to all staff members.

Drills should be performed for situations that may occur at a particular YMCA. Some examples include:

Aquatic emergency	Heart attack (fitness center or class)
Bomb threats	Missing child
Chemical reaction	Robbery attempt
Custody issues with children and families	Spinal injury
Drowning victim	Tornado or other weather emergency
Earthquake	Workplace violence
Fire – general evacuation	Locally relevant emergency scenario

To Surprise or Not To Surprise

Drills may be conducted at times when the YMCA is not busy, or members may be notified in advance that drills are to be conducted during certain intervals. Members may resist taking part in the drills, but they should be informed of the drills ahead of time. Drills are conducted primarily to keep staff prepared for emergencies. The YMCA may want to conduct the drill as a surprise to everyone (except a few people) to more effectively evaluate the level of preparedness.

Document and Evaluate

All drills should be documented for future reference and at least one person should strictly observe the drill and take notes. After the drill is conducted, the procedures should be analyzed to determine if they are effective, and procedures should be modified if necessary. During a drill, special attention must be paid to evaluating how all departments interact. It is important to evaluate how effectively written procedures reflect actual behaviors.