



## **Emergency Planning Guidelines for Nonprofits**

Emergency planning is an important part of any organization's risk management efforts. By preparing for emergencies, an organization can reduce the impact of unexpected events and help to ensure less interruption to their services. These guidelines will assist in the development of a plan for your organization. Plans should be site specific, communicated to staff and volunteers, rehearsed through regular drills and evaluated/updated as needed. Your organization might find it helpful to assign the task of emergency planning and drills to your safety committee.

As you develop your plan it is important to consider the different types of emergencies that may affect your organization. Some emergencies are geographically specific such as flooding, hurricanes and earthquakes. Others might be more specific to programs or services, such as kidnapping for child care centers or vehicular accidents when transportation is provided. All organizations should plan for the risk of some emergency; these might include power outages, fires or workplace violence. Samples of responses to various emergencies are listed in the following pages. Additional information on emergency planning is available from the following sources:

[Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#)

[Federal Emergency Management Agency](#)

[National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#)

[Ready.gov; Prepare, Plan, Stay Informed](#)

[Centers for Disease Control](#)

[Nonprofit Risk Management Center](#)

[US Department of Homeland Security](#)

In addition to the resources sited above, Safe-Wise Consulting has resources available on emergency drills, security concerns, lightning safety for pools, crisis management, business continuity planning and more in the [Online Resource Library](#).

### **Written Plan**

A written plan should be prepared and distributed to all staff of the organization. It is also good practice to post the plan or make available at key locations for staff use such as welcome desks, offices and other locations. The plan should also be adapted to off-site locations and available to that staff. The plan should list the chain of command, important contact information, locations of emergency equipment (first aid, flashlights, etc.), exit routes as well as various situational responses (see below).

## **Chain of Command**

The first step in emergency planning is to identify who is responsible for the emergency planning and response. Organizations should review their chain-of-command and ensure that a single individual is assigned to be the Emergency Coordinator (EC). This individual will be the “Go to” person in the event of an emergency whenever the organization’s services or programs are in operation. It is also important to consider that there may be times when the EC is not available such as early mornings, late evenings, weekends or during vacations. The EC should assign a Director on Duty (DOD) during these times to support front line staff and implement the plan during an emergency or crisis. The DOD will be responsible and specifically trained for managing emergencies and should at a minimum be certified in CPR/AED and First Aid. Some organizations may also choose to hire a third-party to coordinate emergency services and/or security. Finally, the EC must establish an individual to serve as the spokesperson for the organization during times of crisis. The spokesperson will be responsible for all communication with participants, staff, volunteers and media.

## **Communication**

Organizations must determine, as part of the planning, what methods will be available to communicate during various emergencies. These may include alarms, PA systems, phones, cell phones, text alerts, radios, social media and the internet. Communication methods should be checked on a regular basis and offer back-up options when conditions require. Emergency communication may need to be both internal to facilities and external to participants, staff, emergency personnel and the media. Establishing emergency contact information such as emergency services (Police, Fire & EMS), facility management, staff contacts, security services and weather alert systems should be part of the communication planning. A separate [Crisis Communication Plan](#) should be developed that is consistent with the written Emergency Plan.

## **Preparations**

Conducting [emergency drills](#) are an effective technique for preparing emergencies. Drills can help staff feel more comfortable with the stress of emergency situations and ensure that emergency and crisis situations are handled effectively. Situational emergency drills should be conducted at least every quarter, including a full evacuation drill semi-annually. When possible, local agencies such as police, fire and EMS services should be invited to participate in at least one drill per year. These emergency response personnel should be asked to review the organization’s written emergency procedures. Organizations should always remember to notify the local emergency services prior to activating any alarms when drills are conducted. All drills should be [documented](#) and analyzed to determine if they are effective, and if procedures should be modified. Special attention must be paid to evaluating how all departments interact with one another. It is important to evaluate how effectively written procedures reflect actual behaviors. Finally, the findings and procedures should be reviewed with all staff members regularly.

## Sample Emergency Responses

The following situational responses are presented as samples and basic guidelines. These guidelines will assist in the development of a plan for your organization. Your response plans should be site specific, communicated to staff and volunteers, rehearsed through regular drills and evaluated/updated as appropriate. Organizations should utilize local resources such as schools and law enforcement agencies in their planning to ensure that emergency response is consistent with local practices.

### Basic Responses

Emergency response will be based on the situation but often will follow one of the two following reactions: evacuation or lockdown. Review the reactions listed below and then individual emergency scenarios in the following pages. Supportive information such as [exit plans](#), maps, contact lists, informational equipment or chemical sheets can be attached as addendums to the written emergency plan.

#### Building and Site Evacuation

1. Evacuation should be initiated by emergency coordinator, supervisor on duty or authorities when risks warrant evacuation - refer to posted diagrams for exits.
2. Contact EMS and/or police.
3. Be calm and avoid panic and a surge at the exits - provide any assistance required to elderly people, disabled people, etc.
4. Only take immediately necessary items such as medication, purses, phones, etc.
5. Stand by exits (emergency coordinator or supervisor on duty) to make sure no one re-enters, then secure doors.
6. Assemble at Tech Center sign near entrance to parking lot.
7. Follow the instructions and direction of the police or responders.

#### Facility Lockdown

When to activate a Lockdown?

1. When notified to do so by the emergency coordinator, supervisor on duty or local police and government officials.
2. When an armed person (gun/weapon) is identified in/near the facility.
3. The sound of a discharged firearm is heard.
4. For tornados, civil unrest or environmental issues.

Who activates a Lockdown?

1. The emergency coordinator or management staff may activate a Lockdown when an appropriate (see above) emergency is evident.
2. Any immediate life-threatening situation must be reported immediately to emergency coordinator or management staff.
3. Anyone observing or suspecting a dangerous situation must immediately notify the emergency coordinator or management staff.
4. The emergency coordinator or management staff will immediately notify the Police upon activation of a Lockdown.

During an emergency:

1. Communicate with authorities.
2. Assemble and secure “Bull Pen” meeting room (interior shared office area) or move to lower level stairwell as situation requires.
3. Turn off lights and stay away from doors and windows.

## **Sample Situational Responses**

### Assault on Child or Staff

1. Contact the current supervisor or director on duty.
2. Secure the area.
3. Render First Aid.
4. Contact the police (and EMS, if needed).
5. Staff member will stay with the victim until police, family or others arrive.
6. Document incident.

Click [HERE](#) for additional workplace violence guidance from the Non-profit Risk Management Center ([NRMCC](#)).

### Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure

1. If your eyes are splattered with blood or body fluids, flush immediately with water for at least five minutes. It is best to rinse under clean running water.
2. If blood or any body fluids get into your mouth, rinse your mouth with 50/50 mix of hydrogen peroxide and water, and rinse with plain water.
3. For incidents involving both eyes and mouth, report to your health care provider or medical authority immediately for follow-up treatment and care.
4. If you get a needle stick or puncture wound, the wound should be milked to induce bleeding.
5. Wash the area thoroughly with soap and water.
6. For any bite, scratch, or lesion that may have had blood or body fluid exposure, do the following:
  - a. Wash the area thoroughly with soap and water, or pour a small amount of hydrogen peroxide on the wound. (Hydrogen peroxide is known to destroy HIV and other viruses within seconds.)
  - b. Cover the wound with a sterile dressing.
7. Ensure spill is removed with proper procedure and universal precautions in place.
8. Seek medical attention for future action.
9. Contact supervisor.
10. Document incident.

Click [HERE](#) for additional bloodborne pathogen guidance from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration ([OSHA](#)).

### Bomb Threats

1. Note as much detail concerning the call as possible including: gender, accent, age, emotion, background noise and details of the threat.
2. Immediately notify the supervisor or director on duty.
3. Contact the police; follow their instructions; they are now in charge.
4. Ensure that all members, participants and staff are safe.
5. Follow evacuation procedures if directed to do so by police.
6. Document incident.

Click [HERE](#) for additional bomb threat guidance from the Department of Homeland Security ([DHS](#)).

### Building and Site Evacuation

1. Evacuation should be initiated by supervisor or manager on duty or authorities when risks warrant evacuation - refer to posted diagrams for exits.
2. Contact EMS and/or police.
3. Notify staff to assist with pool, childcare, senior and other priority areas.
4. Notify all people to leave the building by PA system.
5. Be calm and avoid panic and a surge at the exits - provide any assistance required to elderly people, people with small children, disabled people, etc.
6. Check rest rooms and locker areas to make sure everyone is out.
7. Stand by exits to make sure no one re-enters.
8. Secure doors and assemble at a specific, safe location outside.
9. Follow the instructions and direction of the police.
10. Document incident.

Click [HERE](#) for a sample emergency action plan template from the Center for Disease Control ([CDC](#)). Click [HERE](#) for Emergency Evacuation Strategies from the Non-profit Risk Management Center ([NRMC](#)).

### Disorderly Persons

There are many different situations that may occur which could cause staff and patrons discomfort because of the improper actions of others. These actions may or may not be illegal, but if they are inconsistent with the organization's values or procedures, they should not be tolerated. In the event a staff person encounters an irate or disruptive person, staff should:

1. Remain as calm as possible.
2. Remember that their personal safety and that of other staff or patrons is a priority.
3. Activate the emergency plan and ask for assistance – contact the police if needed.
4. Attempt to diffuse the situation by listening and engaging the person in conversation, using active listening techniques.
5. Ask the person to leave if appropriate.
6. Document the incident.
7. Report the incident to the supervisor on duty.

Behavioral expectations for patrons and staff should be communicated through a code of conduct and through posted rules within the facility. Staff should be trained in conflict resolution and workplace violence prevention so they are able to identify potentially negative situations before they explode and deal with people without escalating their distress.

Click [HERE](#) for a sample emergency action plan template from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)).

### Earthquake

1. Instruct all occupants to “drop, cover and hold and remain that way until the earth stops moving.
2. Stay away from windows, bookcases, and filing cabinets.
3. Hold on to the item you are using as a cover, if it moves, move with it.
4. If no items are available for cover, crouch by a load-bearing wall and cover your head with your arms.
5. Clear pools.
6. Check on health and safety of all occupants after the threat has passed.
7. Check utilities for disruption/damage (gas, water, sewer).
8. Contact EMS before any evacuation of the facility if damage has occurred.
9. Document incident.

#### *Outdoors:*

1. “Drop, cover and hold,” keeping away from glass, bricks, and power lines.
2. If you are near a building and there is no safer location, take cover in a doorway.

Click [HERE](#) for additional earthquake preparedness guidance from [Ready.gov](#).

### Electrical Storm

#### *Indoors:*

1. Clear pool area and secure doors.
2. Clear all wet areas including showers and changing rooms.
3. Turn off computers.
4. Avoid use of landline phones.
5. Encourage all members, guests and staff to stay indoors away from windows and doors.
6. Wait until 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder is heard.

#### *Outdoors:*

1. Immediately seek shelter.
2. If shelter is not available, use a vehicle (car, van or bus) for shelter.
3. Avoid open areas or lone tall objects.
4. Suspend all water activities.
5. Wait until 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder is heard before beginning activity.

Click [HERE](#) for additional electrical storm preparedness guidance from [Ready.gov](#).

Click [HERE](#) for additional electrical storm preparedness guidance from the Center For Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)).

## Fire Alarm/Emergency

*If smoke or fire is seen:*

1. Activate fire alarm if not sounding.
2. Evacuate everyone in facility, including staff; drop and crawl to avoid smoke and close doors behind you.
3. Call 911 from outside the building.
4. Staff in charge of youth should take attendance.

*If no smoke or fire is seen:*

5. Follow steps above and;
6. If safe to do so, search the building for anyone missing.
7. Supervisor or Director on duty will check area of concern and use fire extinguisher if safe to do so.
8. Follow Site Evacuation procedure if appropriate.
9. Communicate with EMS.
10. Document incident.

Click [HERE](#) for a sample emergency action plan template from the Center For Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)). Click [HERE](#) for Emergency Evacuation Strategies from the Non-profit Risk Management Center ([NRMC](#)).

## Intruders at Camp

1. Unfamiliar persons on the camp property may range from someone lost and looking for directions to a person with intent to do harm to persons or property. Some judgment must be made on the part of staff. Be observant as to the make, model, and license number of any vehicles involved. Persons should be questioned to ascertain who they are and why they are here. Do not antagonize the intruder. Be polite, give assistance if possible, refer the person to the camp office, or ask them to leave. Observe that the person leaves site.
2. If the appearance of the unfamiliar person makes you uncomfortable, approach with another staff member. Someone should stay with the campers away from the situation.
3. If the person seems threatening in any way, do not approach or take any chances. Remove yourselves and the campers from the area, notify the camp office, and observe the whereabouts of the person.
4. If you see or suspect an intruder in camp at night, immediately and quietly notify the other staff members and the camp office. Check all camper sleeping areas with a head count. In order to prevent false alarms and unnecessary fright, all camp personnel will carry flashlights and identify themselves when walking in the camp at night.
5. Teach the campers to come quietly and tell you if they see an unfamiliar person on the property. If a child encounters an unfamiliar person, real or imagined, never tell the child that "it really wasn't anything," "there is no need to be afraid," or "it was just your imagination." Frightened children need to be allowed to experience their fear, to know that it is okay to be afraid, and to talk about their experience.
6. Notify the camp director immediately of any intruders.
7. Complete an incident report and any other reports requested.

## Kidnapping

When a child has been kidnapped or removed from a program without authorization, staff should respond by:

1. Activating the emergency plan and notifying other staff.
2. Securing the facility.
3. Notify the supervisor or director on duty.
4. Taking attendance for all youth and initiating search teams of staff.
5. Notify the Police Department and provide the following info: child's name and age, physical and clothing description of the child, including any distinguishing marks such as birthmarks, and time and location child was last seen.
6. Notify local Child Care authority if applicable.
7. Document incident.

## Lockdown

*When to activate a Lockdown?*

1. When notified to do so by local police or government.
2. When an armed person (gun/weapon) is identified in the facility or on the grounds.
3. The sound of a discharged firearm is heard.
4. A child has been identified as missing.

*Who activates a Lockdown?*

1. The Emergency Coordinator or their designee may activate a Lockdown when an appropriate (see above) emergency is evident.
2. Any immediate life-threatening situation must be reported immediately.
3. Anyone observing or suspecting a dangerous situation must immediately notify Executive Director or their designee.
4. The Executive Director or their designee will immediately notify the Police upon activation of a Lockdown.

*Prior to an emergency:*

1. Review lockdown and evacuation procedures with staff, patrons, youth and parents. Clearly communicate how parents should respond to the emergency and how their children will be protected.
2. Identify communication strategies for notifying police, fire, health officials, staff, patrons and parents. These may include radio, landlines, cell phones, text messages, email and other means. Secondary means for communications should be identified in the event the primary communication method is not available. Prepare phone and other communication lists.
3. Identify meeting room - select an internal room, preferably one without windows for those in the facility to assemble.

*During an emergency:*

1. Activate Lockdown.
2. Notify all concerned.
3. Staff account for all children and occupants.
4. Secure facility, post signage.
5. Move to meeting place/room.
6. Wait for further instructions and/or until Lockdown is cleared.



### Missing or Fleeing Child

When a child is missing, or suspected of fleeing a program, staff should respond by:

1. Activating the emergency plan and notifying other staff.
2. Securing the facility.
3. Notify the supervisor or director on duty.
4. Taking attendance for all youth and initiating search teams of staff.
5. Notify the Police Department (number).
6. Notify the child's parents.
7. Notify local Child Care authority if applicable.
8. Document incident.

### Phone Threat

1. Stay calm and be courteous to the caller.
2. Report the threat immediately to 911.
3. Write down the time, incoming extension number and exact wording of the threat.
4. Do not allow the phone line to be used again until law enforcement has a chance to trace the call.

Click [HERE](#) for additional phone threat preparedness from the Department of Homeland Security ([DHS](#)).

### Power Outage

1. Emergency lighting will be activated and flashlights are located with First aid kits.
2. Call 911 if concerned about a fire or safety hazard.
3. Clear pools, gymnasiums and fitness centers.
4. Supervisor on duty will contact property manager, if needed.
5. Evacuate and secure the facility if power has not returned after 30 minutes.
6. Document incident.

Click [HERE](#) for additional power outage preparedness guidance from [Ready.gov](#).

### Shelter in Place (see also Lockdowns):

Plans for reaction to the atmospheric or environmental release of chemical, biological or other hazardous materials should include a Shelter in Place procedure. In these situations, it may be necessary to seek shelter at a designated location and seal the premises when notified by authorities.

*When to activate Shelter in Place procedures?*

1. When notified to do so by local police or government.
2. When notified through radio, television or other emergency communication system.
3. When a hazardous chemical has been released.

*During an emergency:*

1. Activate Shelter in Place procedures.
2. Notify all concerned.
3. Staff account for all children and occupants.
4. Secure facility, post signage.
5. Deactivate air handling system(s).
6. Forward calls to meeting room phone.
7. Move to meeting place/room.
8. Seal room.
9. Wait for further instructions.

Local officials are the best source of information; following their instructions during and after emergencies is the safest choice. Shelter in Place instructions are usually provided for durations of a few hours.

Click [HERE](#) for additional preparation & planning from the Center For Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) and click [HERE](#) for additional preparing for emergencies information from [Ready.gov](#).

Site Evacuation for Childcare:

1. If it is determined that staff and children will be moved to the alternate site location distant from the childcare, assign children to a designated teacher.
2. Staff should bring the following items to the alternate sites:
  - a. class/staff attendance sheets and visitor sign-in sheets.
  - b. children's emergency and medical information/supplies.
  - c. cell phone, if available.
3. Children will be taken to the alternate site location by walking, vans or the safest means possible.
4. Once at the alternate site location, take attendance again. Teachers must remain with their group of children until the children are picked up by parents or emergency contacts.
5. Director will continue to communicate with parents and coordinate pick-up of children.
6. Director will report incident to licensor.
7. Director will complete a written incident report.

Click [HERE](#) for a sample emergency action plan template from the Center For Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)). Click [HERE](#) for Emergency Evacuation Strategies from the Non-profit Risk Management Center ([NRMC](#)).

### Suspicious Mail or Package

1. Do not touch, smell, or taste unknown substances.
2. Cover substance with paper, trash can, clothes or other material.
3. Evacuate and seal off room.
4. Wash hands thoroughly.
5. Notify supervisor or director on duty.
6. Mark room as "Dangerous".
7. Contact police.
8. Make a list of anyone present in the room at the incident to provide to police.
9. Document incident.

Click [HERE](#) for additional handling suspicious mail preparedness from the Department of Homeland Security ([DHS](#)).

### Tornado Planning

Tornadoes are incredibly violent local storms that extend to the ground with whirling winds that can reach 300 mph. Powerful thunderstorms can generate tornadoes that uproot trees and buildings in a matter of seconds. Tornadoes can occur in any state but occur more frequently in the Midwest, Southeast and Southwest. They usually occur with little or no warning.

When planning emergencies such as tornadoes your organization should consult your state emergency management office, licensing agency and local EMS. Most areas have a tornado warning system in place that monitored with a NOAA Weather Radio. The system will use two alert designations; *Tornado Watch* and *Tornado Warning*.

A *Tornado Watch* means tornadoes are likely and organizations, staff and participants should be ready to take shelter. A *Tornado Warning* means that a tornado has been sighted in the area or is indicated by radar. Staff and participants should take shelter immediately.

Tornado procedures should also include methods to inform personnel when tornado warnings are posted, reviewing facilities to designate tornado shelter areas and other preparations. [Ready.gov](#) has additional resources [HERE](#) that can assist you with planning for weather emergencies.

### Violent Intruder / Active Shooter Planning (or workplace violence):

Quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. Remember that other staff are likely to follow your lead during an active shooter situation. Ensure that any person under your responsibility is accounted for.

**RUN**: If there is an accessible escape path, evacuate the premises. Be sure to:

- Have an escape route and plan in mind.
- Evacuate with those in your care and anyone near you.
- Leave your belongings behind.
- Prevent anyone from entering an area where the active shooter may be.
- Keep your hands visible.
- Follow the instructions of any police officers.
- Do not attempt to move wounded people.
- Call 911 when you are safe.

**HIDE**: If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you. Your hiding place should:

- Be out of the active shooter's view.
- Provide protection if shots are fired (closed & locked door).
- Not trap you or restrict your options for movement.

To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place, lock the door or blockade the door with heavy furniture.

If the active shooter is nearby, lock the door and silence your cell phone and/or pager. Remember to turn off any source of noise, hide behind large items and remain quiet.

If evacuation and hiding out are not possible, remain calm and call 911 (if possible) to alert police to the active shooter's location. When calling 911 if you cannot speak, leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen.

**FIGHT**: As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter by:

- Acting as aggressively as possible against him/her.
- Throwing items and improvising weapons.
- Yelling.
- Committing to your actions.

### What to expect when law enforcement arrives

Law enforcement's purpose is to stop the active shooter as soon as possible. Officers will proceed directly to the area in which the last shots were heard.

- Officers usually arrive in teams of four (4).
- Officers may wear regular patrol uniforms or external bulletproof vests, Kevlar helmets, and other tactical equipment.
- Officers may be armed with rifles, shotguns, handguns.
- Officers may use pepper spray or tear gas to control the situation.
- Officers may shout commands, and may push individuals to the ground for their safety.

How to react when law enforcement arrives:

- Remain calm, and follow officers' instructions.
- Put down any items in your hands (i.e., bags, jackets).
- Immediately raise hands and spread fingers.
- Keep hands visible at all times.
- Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as holding on to them for safety.
- Avoid pointing, screaming and/or yelling.
- Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction when evacuating, just proceed in the direction from which officers are entering the premises.

Information to provide to law enforcement or 911 operator:

- Location of the active shooter.
- Number of shooters, if more than one.
- Physical description of shooter/s.
- Number and type of weapons held by the shooter/s.
- Number of potential victims at the location.

The first officers to arrive to the scene will not stop to help injured persons. Expect rescue teams comprised of additional officers and emergency medical personnel to follow the initial officers. These rescue teams will treat and remove any injured persons. They may also call upon able-bodied individuals to assist in removing the wounded from the premises. Once you have reached a safe location or an assembly point, you will likely be held in that area by law enforcement until the situation is under control, and all witnesses have been identified and questioned. Do not leave until law enforcement authorities have instructed you to do so.

Click [HERE](#) for additional active shooter preparedness from the Department of Homeland Security ([DHS](#)). Click [HERE](#) for an Active Shooter – Fact Sheet from the Non-profit Risk Management Center ([NRMC](#)).

## Wildfire Planning

With the increasing rate of wildfires across the US each year many organizations are at real risk. Organizations located in areas at reasonable risk of wildfire must prepare and plan for this traumatic event.

### Before a wildfire starts:

- Create a plan for response, communication, evacuation and transportation.
- Gather equipment and supplies needed in an emergency.
- Post evacuation plans, identify assembly areas and run emergency drills.
- Prepare properties by clearing yards, gutters, eaves, porches and decks. Remove dead vegetation and flammable materials around buildings; create buffer zones of [defensible space](#).
- Prune trees so the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet from the ground and keep lawns hydrated.
- Develop contingency arrangements for evacuations and shelter in place.
- Communicate with the local fire department about how to prepare, when to evacuate, and proper response in the event of a wildfire.
- Identify water sources and utility shut-offs on a written site map.

### During a wildfire in the area:

- Stay aware of the latest news and updates from local media and fire department.
- Communicate your plan to all staff, participants and other effected parties such as families and transportation vendors.
- Follow the directions of fire officials and respond quickly to evacuation directives.

### After a wildfire:

- Continue to listen to news updates for information about the fire. Return to facilities only after having been notified by authorities.
- Execute your crisis communication and media plan.
- Contact insurance representatives.

Click [HERE](#) for resources in developing a plan for schools, child care centers and workplaces From the Federal Emergency Management Agency ([FEMA](#)). Click [HERE](#) for preparation information from the American Camp Association ([ACA](#)). Click [HERE](#) for preparation information from the National Fire Protection Association ([NFPA](#)):