



Conducting Emergency Drills

Emergency drills are an effective technique for preparing organizations for stressful situations and ensuring that crises are handled effectively. Many organizations 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. Organizations 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 organization 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 organization. Some examples include:

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| 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 / Active Shooter |
| Fire – general evacuation | Locally relevant emergency scenario |

To Surprise or Not to Surprise

Drills may be conducted at times when the facility is not busy, or patrons may be notified in advance that drills are to be conducted during certain intervals. Patrons 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 organization 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.