

Minnesota Department of Public Safety State Fire Marshal Division

Hotel fire drills

About

Fire safety and evacuation plans outline staff duties and responsibilities in times of emergencies. On-going training is required to help ensure that staff is aware of those duties and responsibilities. Fire drills serve as an opportunity for staff members to demonstrate, under simulated fire conditions, that they can perform those duties and responsibilities safely and efficiently.

Fire drills are more than an exercise designed to evaluate staff response to a simulated emergency. They are also a test of your facility's fire safety/evacuation plans and staff training programs. Not all fire drills run smoothly. That's okay, so long as staff and management learn from them and correct mistakes made. It's important, therefore, that there be a critique of each drill so that any problems encountered can be addressed. Perhaps the problems are due to incomplete or outdated fire safety/evacuation plans. Perhaps there's a need for additional staff training.

Fire drill requirements

Minnesota State Fire Code (MSFC) 405.2 and Table 405.2 requires that fire drills be conducted quarterly for all employees. As specified in MSFC 405.5, records must be kept of these drills. At a minimum, these records shall include:

- Identity of the person conducting the drill
- Date and time of the drill
- Notification method used
- Staff members on duty and participating
- Number of occupants evacuated
- Special conditions simulated
- Problems encountered
- Time required to accomplish complete evacuation

Fire drills – the basics

Guidance and direction in the conduct of fire drills can be found in MSFC 405. Some important points to remember:

- Responsibility for the planning and conduct of fire drills shall be assigned to competent persons designated to exercise leadership [see MSFC 405.3].
- Where required by the fire code official, prior notification of emergency evacuation drills shall be given to the fire code official. Drills shall be designed in cooperation with the local authorities. [see MSFC 405.1, 405.6]



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- Drills shall be held at unexpected times and under varying conditions to simulate the unusual conditions that occur in case of fire. [see MSFC 405.4]
- There are a number of ways that can be used to alert staff of a fire in a fire drill scenario including:
 - Place a sign, flashing light, picture of a fire or red-colored cloth in the area of simulated fire origin.
 - Hand a note to a staff person outlining a fire scenario they've just discovered.
 - Activate a manual fire alarm pull box and have staff respond accordingly. (see Item #5 for more information on fire alarm systems)
- Where a fire alarm system is provided, emergency evacuation drills shall be initiated by activating the fire alarm system. However, this may be simulated if there are guests in the hotel. [see MSFC 405.7]
- As building occupants arrive at the assembly point, efforts shall be made to determine if all occupants have been successfully evacuated or have been accounted for. [see MSFC 405.8]
- An electrically or mechanically operated signal used to recall occupants after an evacuation shall be separate and distinct from the signal used to initiate the evacuation. The recall signal initiation means shall be manually operated and under the control of the person in charge of the premises or the official in charge of the incident. No one shall reenter the premises until authorized to do so by the official in charge. [see MSFC 405.9]

Document your drills

Almost as important as conducting the drill is documenting the fact that it occurred. A sample form has been developed by the Minnesota State Fire Marshal Division (SFMD). The form can be used “as is” or serve as a guide that you can use to create your own fire drill record. In any case, you must ensure that your form includes all the information shown on the SFMD form.

It's important that at least two people in your facility know where your drill records are kept to increase the likelihood that they can be readily provided if requested during an inspection. It is recommended that these records be maintained for at least three years.

Questions

Any questions related to this issue should be directed to the code specialist with the SFMD at 651-201-7221 or you can e-mail questions to fire.code@state.mn.us.

