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# FIRE SAFETY COMMUNITY NEWS

## FIRE SAFETY FOR THE PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED IN HIGH-RISE OFFICE BUILDINGS

**F**ire and emergency situations are frightening and pose a threat to us all. This threat is heightened for those who are physically challenged.

Fire safety involves safety for the occupants and firefighters in a building during evacuation or extinguishment of a fire. A good design is the first step. While building design and construction continue to improve, there has been an increased awareness, especially since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, regarding evacuation issues for the mobility impaired and designing space accordingly.

An effectively designed and communicated evacuation plan is required to maximize fire safety. In 1978, Local Law 5, the first ordinance to address office building evacuation planning, came into effect for New York City buildings higher than 100 feet. This stringent law set standards for fire suppression system installation and fire alarm communication. Each floor must be equipped with at least one dedicated telephone with two-way direct connection to the building's Fire Command Station. Fire alarm systems are to be connected to a monitoring company.

### WHAT'S INSIDE

- **Fire Safety In High Rise Offices**
- **Tips for Assisting People With Disabilities**
- **Calling 911 for the Hearing Impaired**
- **Fire Safety In the Home**

The law requires that:

- The building be subject to periodic inspections.
- Each building superintendent/owner file a fire safety plan with the Fire Department and engage a trained, certified fire safety director and a deputy fire safety director. These directors are required to maintain the plan, be familiar with the operation of the fire command station and direct the phased evacuation of building occupants.
- Other members of the building staff are designated to assist the fire department in locating the fire and operating building mechanical systems.
- Each floor has a designated fire warden who is responsible for coordination of evacuations.
- Deputy fire wardens are appointed based on the number of occupants on each floor.
- Finally, workers on each floor are designated to check the restrooms in the event of an evacuation. These tenants are trained by the building's fire safety director.

Recent events have fostered a heightened awareness of the need to quickly evacuate a building. While swift evacuation is critical in the event of a terrorist act, it is not always the best response to a fire.



**LET'S KEEP YOU  
FIRE SAFE!**

# TO BE PREPARED FOR AN EMERGENCY

## RIGHT NOW

1. Know your workplace and the location of the stairwells. A fire-safe building has alternate escape routes from nearly every location that might be occupied.
2. Notify your fire safety director and floor warden of your location, disability and evacuation concerns.
3. Be aware of the building's construction. Fireproof construction prevents the spread of fire and does not require physical evacuation in the event of a containable fire.
4. If you are hearing impaired, speak to your supervisor and fire safety director to request a strobe fire alarm.
5. If you have a physical limitation, keep a flame-resistant blanket in your workspace
6. Be observant and report any obstructions or constrictions along possible escape routes that might impede good fire safety. Exits should be clearly visible and illuminated.
7. Practice. Practice. Practice. Evacuation drills should entail actually evacuating the building.

## IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY

1. Move. Do not stop to collect personal belongings.
2. Proceed to the designated meeting place.
3. Listen for the tones of the fire alarm system and to any instructions issued by the fire safety director or floor wardens.
4. Stay low to the ground. Smoke inhalation will hinder you from traveling to exit the building.
5. Close doors behind you. Preventing air flow will prevent oxygen from feeding the fire.
6. Test doors for heat with the back of your hand before opening.
7. If you catch fire: Stop, Drop and Roll.
8. Under no circumstances should you re-enter the building.

Know where the  
Emergency Fire  
Stair Exits  
are located.



Know where  
to go in case  
you need  
instructions.



## Evacuating the Mobility Impaired



**Cradle Technique**



**Chair Carry Technique**



## TIPS FOR ASSISTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

### FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

- Speak loudly and clearly without yelling when entering a space or area of refuge.
- Ask how you may be of assistance.
- If directing a group, have them grasp each other's hands.
- Lead the person(s) to a safe area outside the building — far enough away to minimize any confusion or disorientation in a crowd.

### FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED

- Let people know of your presence. If possible, flicking the lights will let people know you are entering the space or refuge area.
- Make sure both bell and strobe alarms are used as smoke/fire detectors. Many people who are deaf or hard of hearing will not hear the smoke alarm bell.
- Speak directly to the person you are addressing, even if an interpreter is present. Maintain eye contact and speak in a natural tone.
- Do not chew gum. Gum chewing may confuse an individual who is able to read lips.
- Use facial and hand gestures to help guide or explain directions.
- Make sure you are understood. Repeat the directions if necessary.
- Offer a pencil and paper, write slowly and let the individual read what you write.
- The hearing impaired should keep a flashlight at their workstation. It will prove useful to locate them in an emergency.

### FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

- Treat the individual as you would anyone else. Do not treat the person(s) as you would a child.
- Make things simple. Do not confuse the individual with complicated instructions.
- Accompany the person to an area at a safe distance from the building or to the medical assessment staging area.

### FOR THE MOBILITY IMPAIRED

- For person(s) using a crutch or cane, assist them in descending stairs. Some people may be able to use the stairs themselves.
- Follow carrying techniques, such as the one-person cradle carry or the two-person chair carry.

#### Cradle Technique

1. Bend down and place an arm behind the person's knees, with the other arm in the middle of the person's back.
2. Take the arm of the individual and place it over your shoulder.
3. Lift the person up, carrying him/her in front of you.

#### Chair Carry Technique

1. One carrier stands at each side of the individual to be lifted.
2. Take each arm of the individual and place it over each carrier's shoulder.
3. Grab the forearm of the other carry partner around the lower back of the individual to be lifted.
4. Reach behind the individual's knees and grab the other carry partner's hand.
5. Lean in and on the count of three, lift the individual.

Use of evacuation chairs is controversial because it takes time to locate the device and secure the individual. Also, if the device fails, the escape passage may be blocked.

## CALLING 911

*For the Hearing Impaired*

There are two ways to call 911 in an emergency. By phone or by using any emergency fire alarm box located throughout the City on street corners.

### 1. CALLING BY PHONE

Call 911 and communicate by tapping a standard emergency code. Using a sharp metal object, tap two times. Wait, then tap two times again. 911 operators are trained to understand this code and will immediately dispatch a police car to determine the nature of the emergency.

You can also call Fire Communications directly using the same procedure as above. Tap two times. Wait, then tap twice again. Fire dispatchers will send a fire apparatus immediately.

911 Operators can also receive TTY messages directly from the caller. Fire Communications, similarly, can receive any public TTY communication

### 2. FIRE ALARM BOXES

Using the standard "pull" fire alarm box will result in fire apparatus being dispatched immediately. No voice communication is needed.

Some fire alarm boxes can receive voice communications. A FDNY operator will dispatch a fire apparatus immediately upon hearing either a voice request or a "tapping code" (same as above) request from any ERS Alarm Box.



## FDNY HOME FIRE SAFETY TIPS

*FDNY wants you to become part of our Fire Safety Team. Keeping you and your family fire safe -- whether at home, work or school -- takes planning, preparation and teamwork.*

### FIRE PREVENTION STARTS WITH YOU.

*So talk it over with your family and remember:*

#### 1 INSTALL SMOKE DETECTORS

*Test them often to make sure they work. Replace the batteries at least twice a year when you change your clock for daylight savings.*

#### 2 HAVE A HOME FIRE ESCAPE PLAN

*Develop a home escape plan with your family in case of fire. Practice it. Have a pre-arranged meeting place somewhere outside.*

#### 3 HOME SAFETY INSPECTION

*Conduct a safety inspection of potential fire hazards in the home. Eliminate them. Make every room fire safe.*



City of New York  
Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor

Fire Department, City of New York  
Nicholas Scoppetta, Commissioner



Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities  
Catherine Paradiso, Executive Director

### YOUR SAFETY IS OUR ONLY CONCERN

FIRE DEPARTMENT  
CITY OF NEW YORK  
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BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201

NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE  
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES  
100 GOLD STREET  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10038

### FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL

FDNY FIRE SAFETY EDUCATION (718) 999-2343  
FDNY BUREAU OF FIRE PREVENTION (718) 999-2541  
MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (212) 788-2830

#### ON THE WEB

FDNY: [www.nyc.gov/fdny](http://www.nyc.gov/fdny)  
MOPD: [www.nyc.gov/mopd](http://www.nyc.gov/mopd)