



Preparedness Committee  
Security and Life Safety

## Commercial Office Building Protective Measures

<b>Topic:</b>	<b>Safety Drill Best Practices (Chicago)</b>
<b>Revision Date:</b>	May 2019

### *Background*

Property management and security teams have a range of possible drill options available to them, including but not limited to: fire evacuation drills, severe weather shelter-in-place drills, active threat run-hide-fight drills. It is a best practice for high-rise commercial buildings to rehearse for each of these threats or hazards within their facility.

### *Safety Drills Overview*

Per the ordinance, “With regard to non-residential buildings, all employees, tenants and other occupants shall participate in such safety drills...Drills may occur on a floor-by-floor basis, and a drill may conclude when all participating occupants have fully entered and have begun using designated stairwells.”

### *Chapter 13-78 / High Rise Buildings – Emergency Procedures Summary*

This code was enacted in 2001 and sets forth the life safety standards on how high rise buildings (over 80 feet) will prepare for and respond to fire related emergencies. Specifically, the code covers the following areas:

- Building Classifications
- Building Categories
- Emergency Evacuation Plan
- Emergency Preparedness Certificate
- Designated Emergency Evacuation Teams

Occupancy and Category Classifications are important because they will determine the following:

- If an emergency plan needs to be filed with the Office of Emergency Management and Communication (OEMC)
- The number of emergency drills to be conducted over the course of a year
- Whether Fire Safety Directors and/or Deputy Fire Safety Directors are necessary
- Required staffing for Emergency Evacuation Teams

Chapter 13 goes on to identify several key safety factors for high-rise buildings, summarized by the table below. It also provides specific guidance on safety drills in large commercial buildings, and the safety team members required to be in place. (Building classifications include Residential, Assembly, Open Air Assembly, Business, Mercantile, and Industrial.)

13-78 Requirements	Category 1 > 781 feet	Category 2 541-780 feet	Category 3 276-540 feet	Category 4 80-275 feet
Evacuation Plan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Filed with OEMC	Yes	Yes	No	No
Plan available for inspection	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FSD and Deputy FSD	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Building Evacuation Supervisor	Yes	Yes	No	No
Designated Fire Warden(s)	Yes	No	No	No
Emergency Evacuation Team	Yes	Yes	No	No
Evacuation Drills	2x Year	1x Year	Recommended	Recommended
Training/Distribution	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual

*Chapter 13-78 Basic Requirements*

***Key Best Practices***

Building safety teams have a wide latitude with how to conduct drills within their given facilities. A few practical tips can help achieve the objective of a safe and effective exercise.

- **Provide advance notice.** Alert first responders via the contacts on page 5. Employees and tenants should also be notified in advance of any drills which may disrupt their daily routines. If some element of surprise is desired by property management, a wide window can be announced – for example, “a fire evacuation drill will take place one morning next week.”
- **Hold a pre-drill seminar.** Whether held a few weeks before the actual drill, or on the morning of, an informational seminar can make the exercise go more smoothly and also go a long way towards allaying any participant fears or concerns. Inviting representatives from tenant safety teams will also help them better understand the scenario, and make their respective suites better prepared.
- **In an evacuation scenario drill, move employees and tenants a short distance.** Per Chicago ordinance, it is generally unnecessary to move office staff completely out of the building during a drill. Relocating just a few floors to a nearby common area, such as an elevator lobby, is a safer practice than making participants descend 20 or 30 stories in an emergency stairwell to reach the ground level.
- **A shelter-in-place drill is not a run-hide-fight drill.** Do not attempt to cover too many hazards or threats in a single drill scenario. For example, employees and tenants should have a clear understanding that sheltering in place due to a severe weather scenario is very different from utilizing run-hide-fight protocols for an active shooter. See other documents within the BOMA/Chicago best practices library for more information.
- **Hold a debrief.** When the drill or exercise is complete for a given floor, gather the tenant safety team members together for a quick briefing in a common area such as an elevator lobby. This gives safety team leaders an opportunity to share experiences and observations immediately, while recollections are still fresh. Building management and/or security personnel will lead the conversation, which should take no more than 3 to 5 minutes per occupied floor.

- **Document an internal after-action review.** Internally, the building team should discuss any issues they observed, with tenants, participation, equipment etc. Any issues, action items, or improvements should be documented and addressed. This report should be stored with other supporting documents from the training and drill, such as the training sign in sheet, drill plan, tenant emails, affidavit, etc. The affidavit should be filed with the city, see page 4 for more information.

### *Emergency Evacuation Teams*

Each plan for Category 1 buildings shall include the following required designated personnel. For all others, this list should be used as a guide for how to staff building and tenant emergency response teams.

**Fire Safety Director (“F.S.D.”).** The plan must designate an F.S.D. The F.S.D. must be an employee of that building. The F.S.D. shall obtain and maintain an emergency preparedness certificate, and shall provide said certificate for inspection upon request to personnel of the department of buildings, the office of emergency management and communications, the fire department and the department of police.

**Deputy(ies) F.S.D.** The plan must designate one or more deputies F.S.D. to serve as required by Section 13-78-060 in the absence of the F.S.D. Each deputy F.S.D. must be an employee of that building. Each deputy F.S.D. shall obtain and maintain an emergency preparedness certificate, and shall provide said certificate for inspection upon request to personnel of the department of buildings, the office of emergency management and communications, the fire department and the department of police.

**Building Evacuation Supervisor.** The plan must designate a building evacuation supervisor. In a residential building, the building evacuation supervisor may be a resident of that building. In a non-residential building, the building evacuation supervisor must be an employee of that building.

**Fire Wardens.** The plan must designate fire wardens in sufficient numbers to carry out their duties as required by this chapter. In a residential building, some or all fire wardens may be residents of that building. In a non-residential building, some or all fire wardens may be employees of that building; provided, however, that if the owner does not wish to supply one or more fire wardens, then such fire wardens shall be supplied by building tenants, in numbers proportionate to tenant size.

**Emergency Evacuation Team.** The plan must designate an emergency evacuation team. In a residential building, the emergency evacuation team may include or be composed of residents of that building. In a non-residential building, the emergency evacuation team may include or be composed of employees of that building; provided, however, that if the owner does not wish to supply one or more members of an emergency evacuation team, then such members shall be supplied by building tenants, in numbers proportionate to tenant size.

### ***City Contact Information***

With advance notice, local police, fire, and/or emergency managers may be able to participate in or observe live drills at a specific building. As a best practice, building safety teams should notify their local first responders at least two weeks in advance of any significant drill or exercise. Remember that notifying public safety agencies can be a key mitigation against false alarms resulting from scheduled events.

- Chicago Fire Department Bureau of Fire Prevention:
  - 312-744-4723
- Office of Emergency Management and Communications:
  - 312-746-8800 or [Barbara.Schmidt@cityofchicago.org](mailto:Barbara.Schmidt@cityofchicago.org)
- Chicago Police Department, 1<sup>st</sup> District (South Loop):
  - 312-745-4290 or [CAPS001District@chicagopolice.org](mailto:CAPS001District@chicagopolice.org)
- Chicago Police Department, 12<sup>th</sup> District (Fulton Market):
  - 312-746-8396 or [CAPS012District@chicagopolice.org](mailto:CAPS012District@chicagopolice.org)
- Chicago Police Department, 18<sup>th</sup> District (North Loop):
  - 312-742-5870 or [CAPS018District@chicagopolice.org](mailto:CAPS018District@chicagopolice.org)

### ***Safety Drill Affidavit***

- Applicable to Category 1 buildings only – best practice for all buildings
- On an annual basis, the owner shall file with the fire commissioner an affidavit certifying that at least two safety drills have taken place on all occupied floors during the past year
- A PDF version of the affidavit may be found below



Safety Drill  
Affidavit.pdf

### ***Conclusion / Follow-Up***

Emergency Preparedness measures may vary from building to building based on the property classification and category. The Chicago Fire Department Bureau of Fire Prevention is a great resource and can assist you in understanding life safety code, standards and guidelines. Recent versions of the Municipal Code of Chicago can also be located [here](#).

The BOMA/Chicago Preparedness Committee continues to support various best practices which are intended to empower building safety teams to conduct safe, timely, and effective drills and exercises within their respective facilities.

*Note: The above measures are provided for informational purposes only and do not constitute any set standard, guideline, or code. They are offered as possible options to consider when developing response measures to issues in a commercial office building. When developing response measures, consider all variable, such as building size and design, staffing, time of day, etc. The purpose of these measures is to provide general information to those persons responsible for developing site-specific protective measures, to serve as practices to consider when drafting emergency operations plans, and do not constitute any set policy or procedure.*