



# OFF-CAMPUS

By Tim Knisely

June 2018

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## Part 2: Emergency

### Guides

Do you have residential high-rise buildings in your community? Do these buildings have Emergency Guides for tenants to be prepared in an emergency, in accordance with your local fire code? Or, is there even a fire code requirement? This month we will be looking at the requirements for plans in accordance with Chapter 4 of the International Fire Code, 2015 edition. Chapter 4 outlines the Emergency Planning and Preparedness requirements and is categorized by use group or activity. While some use groups require a fire drill or exercising of the facility's emergency plan on a periodic basis, R-2 or

multi-family buildings require the preparation and use of an Emergency Guide. This makes sense as the residents are non-transient and can respond to an emergency without assistance. This guide is provided to tenants upon taking occupancy. It must be stressed to the tenants (and maybe their parents) that they must read and understand the contents. And, if they have questions to ask.

The Emergency Guide should contain the following information, all customized to each building, and your buildings may have other features not listed:

1. Description of the fire protection equipment that is installed in the building, including:
  - a. The smoke alarms in the apartments; how

to test the alarms and are there maintenance requirements of the tenant - such as battery maintenance.

- b. Or, are there smoke detectors that are part of the fire alarm system. In this case there probably isn't an option to test the detector, but some may try.
- c. Sprinklers: If equipped, basic information on how these work and instructions on how to avoid damaging or painting the sprinkler itself.
- d. The building fire alarm - what does it sound like? What should one do when the alarm sounds? Will the alarm provide voice instructions, or not? Does the alarm only evacuate portions of



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| <p>the building initially?<br/>And, to await further instructions if that is the case.</p> <p>e. Where are the exits, and a reminder to use alternate exits on occasion to know where it leads?</p> <p>f. Fire extinguishers - where are these located. Simple instructions on the use such as P.A.S.S. And, inform them that its ok not to use the extinguisher if they aren't comfortable doing so. Just get out safely!</p> <p>g. What type of cooking appliances are present. Specifically, gas or electric. Do they know how to use each? What does natural gas or propane smell like?</p> <p>h. What is the local emergency number,</p> | <p>even if it is 9-1-1.<br/>Many students will Google the words 'Fire Department' for the city they are in. The number that appears may be a business number, or a station number - and these calls may go unanswered.</p> <p>i. Are there Areas of Refuge, or protected elevator lobbies? If so, instructions on how to use the two-way communications equipment in these locations.</p> <p>j. And, any other systems that are present and may be of importance to the tenant.</p> <p>k. And, finally - what is their street address. Not only the apartment and building name. Not</p> | <p>having this may cause delays in response.</p> <p>With today's ease of access to electronic media, the Emergency Guide can be much more than a printed page of instructions. It can include photos, sound bytes of the alarm and samples of the voice messages. Or, interactive buttons to gather more information.</p> <p>In addition to providing this information to the tenants, it is also a good idea to include this to the parents on your emergency list. The parents may discuss this with their son or daughter. It is not uncommon for the tenant to call home, or call 'Mom' to report an emergency. Plus, this may give those back at</p> |
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home a little peace of mind.

Do you have apartment owners in your community that have Emergency Guides for your off-campus apartments? If you have any that the owners would be willing to share, please do.

For those with on-campus housing, the rules for emergency plans are a little different. Please refer to Chapter 4 for campus-owned buildings and dormitory buildings for both emergency plans and fire drill requirements.

Have a fire safe and happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July everyone!

*Tim*

Tim Knisely is on the Board of Directors for The Center and the Senior Fire Inspector for the Centre Region Code Administration in State College, PA.

In this position he manages the Existing Structures Division that administers the fire and property maintenance code in all existing commercial and residential rental properties, and coordinates the life safety education for the community including off-campus and Greek housing.

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