



CAMPUS FIRE SAFETY CODE TALK

Campus Fire Safety e-NewZone

Developing Emergency Action Plans in High-Rise Buildings

Kristin Bigda, P.E.
Senior Fire Protection Engineer, NFPA

Students and staff are back on campus, settled into their new routine of classes and homework, meetings, sports and social events. The last thing on anyone's mind is what to do if they are caught in an emergency situation. But the scary truth is, it can happen to anyone, at any time. With the development, communication, and practice of a building's Emergency Action Plan (EAP), the outcome and impact of an emergency event on campus can much less severe. EAPs are a critical component of assuring life safety in buildings.

NFPA 101®, *Life Safety Code*®, requires that all new high-rise buildings, and some existing high-rise buildings, be provided with an Emergency Action Plan. This means that these buildings (classroom buildings, offices, dormitories, laboratories, etc.) must have a plan for what occupants are to do in the event of an emergency. At a minimum, EAPs are required to include the following seven pieces of information, specific to the building under consideration:

- Procedures for reporting of emergencies
- Occupant and staff response to emergencies
- Evacuation, relocation, and shelter-in-place procedures appropriate to the building, its occupancy, emergencies, and hazards
- Appropriateness of the use of elevators
- Design and conduct of fire drills
- Type and coverage of building fire protection systems
- Other items required by the authority having jurisdiction

Other information that may also be considered for inclusion in the building's EAP. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Purpose of plan
- Description of building



CAMPUS FIRE SAFETY CODE TALK

Campus Fire Safety e-NewZone

- Appointment, organization, and contact details of designated building staff to carry out the emergency duties
- Identification of events considered life safety hazards impacting the building
- Specific procedures to be used for each type of emergency
- Requirements and responsibilities for assisting people with disabilities
- Procedures for accounting for occupants
- Training of building staff, building emergency response teams, and other occupants in their responsibilities
- Conducting fire and evacuation drills
- Means to update the plan, as necessary

Three populations are impacted by the development and implementation of an Emergency Action Plan (EAP): those that use the plan, those that are responsible for executing the plan during an emergency, and those that review and approve the plan. For those general occupants of a building, an EAP is created to provide the information and instruction needed to act safely and efficiently during an emergency. Building occupants should familiarize themselves with the requirements of the building EAP pertaining to their responsibilities, cooperate with the designated individuals that are part of an emergency response team, and participate in EAP drills. Building occupants should comply with directions upon an announcement that the building EAP has been activated, including a fire evacuation or an all-hazard evacuation such as Remain-in-Place, In-Building Relocation, Partial Building Evacuation, and Total Building Evacuation. It is critical that the EAP be simple yet comprehensive in its instruction and details. It is also imperative that the occupants of a building be trained in the necessary actions required during an emergency when the EAP is activated. Occupants should be made aware of changes to the EAP and should be provided access to the EAP.

In order to properly execute an EAP, a set group of individuals that are responsible for the various components and actions required during an emergency is needed. It is recommended that the owner of a building appoint a “Building Emergency Response Team” consisting of a positions such as a Fire and Life Safety Director (FLSD), Deputy Fire and Life Safety Directors (DFLSDs), Fire and Life Safety Floor Wardens, Deputy Fire and Life Safety Floor Wardens, and support response team members to respond



CAMPUS FIRE SAFETY CODE TALK

Campus Fire Safety e-NewZone

when an emergency occurs. Depending on the nature of the occupancy, members of the response team may be modified as appropriate. All members should be designated in the EAP, with the authority, duties, and qualifications set forth in the plan. The members of the emergency response team are essential to the safety of occupants during a building emergency.

Authorities Having Jurisdiction and campus officials also play a central role in the development and implementation of Emergency Action Plans. Per NFPA 101®, required emergency action plans are required to be submitted to the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) for review and then reviewed and updated as required by AHJ.

The simple presence of an Emergency Action Plan is certainly a worthy first step, but it's not enough. Building occupants should be made aware of the building's EAP and offered instructional exercises to become familiar with the requirements and procedures of the EAP. Drills and instructional exercises are important in all occupancies, but become essential in buildings such as dormitories where occupants spend much of their time and where they sleep. Visitors and guests should also be made aware of the EAP. Following any significant change to the building, drill, or actual emergency or reported emergency occurring in the building, the EAP should be reviewed and updated as necessary. During an actual emergency, additional information regarding the event may be collected and used to further improve and modify the EAP. It also identifies improvements in areas such as training, maintenance, interaction with local emergency response organizations, or occupant management.

In January 2014, NFPA's High-Rise Building Safety Advisory Committee released the first edition of their "Guide to Developing Emergency Action Plans for All-Hazard Emergencies in High-Rise Office Buildings" which is provided to supplement the provision in model codes, such as NFPA 101®, that require Emergency Action Plans for all new and some existing high-rise buildings. While the Guide is written for high-rise office buildings, the concepts contained within the Guide can be applied to other occupancy types as well, especially those common on college campuses such as dormitories and classroom buildings. The document is available to download for free at www.nfpa.org/highrise.



CAMPUS FIRE SAFETY CODE TALK

Campus Fire Safety e-NewZone

No one is ever really ready when an emergency occurs. However, the presence of an Emergency Action Plan can help to make sure students and staff on college campuses are more prepared, and certainly, more safe than they would be if an EAP did not exist.

Sources: NFPA 101 *Life Safety Code*®, 2015 edition. National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169.

Kristin Bigda, P.E. is a Senior Fire Protection Engineer in NFPA's Building Fire Protection and Life Safety Division. She is staff liaison to four Building Code and Life Safety Code technical committees as well as NFPA 80, NFPA 105, and various other NFPA technical committee projects. She serves as co-editor of the NFPA 1 Handbook.



The Center for Campus Fire Safety

978.961.0410

SupportTeam@campusfiresafety.org