

# Responding to Emergency Situations

**MAP No. 30-10**

**Effective Date: March 5, 2009**

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**State of Alaska**  
**Department of Health & Social Services**  
**Division of Public Assistance**  
**FIELD SERVICES**  
**MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

Approved by:

Effective Date: March 5, 2009

Ron Kreher, Chief of Field Services

## PURPOSE

To clarify expectations and provide written guidelines for responding to emergency situations and building evacuations.

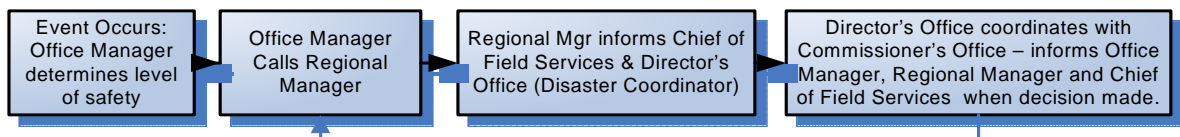
## BACKGROUND

This guidance provides a framework for responding to building evacuations, fires, bomb threats, and severe weather conditions. Employees play a key role in emergency action plans. Supervisors are expected to ensure employees are made aware of these procedures and expectations, and receive training as needed.

## REQUIRED ACTION IN ALL CASES

Regardless of the type of emergency situation or condition, the following requirements always apply:

- 1) Personnel are required to report any emergency situations or conditions to their immediate supervisor as soon as possible. If the immediate supervisor is not available, the Regional Manager and the Disaster Coordinator shall be contacted. If none of the previously referenced staff are available, staff shall ensure contact with the Director.



- 2) All media contacts regarding DPA response to emergency situations are the responsibility of the DHSS Commissioner's Office of Public Information. Any media contacts should be forwarded to the designated Public Information contact. The purpose of this provision is to ensure that the media is furnished with accurate information and that speculation and rumors are kept to a minimum.
- 3) If an alternate work site is required, the Regional Manager or designee must ensure that adequate space is available with telephones and computers. The Regional Manager will work with the Chief of Field Services in this regard.
- 4) Key Phone Numbers:
  - Director's Office 907-465-2680
  - Chief of Field Services 907-465-5843 or 907-465-2680
  - Chief of Policy and Program Development 907-465-2340 or 907-465-3347
  - DHSS Public Information Office 907-465-1613 or 907-269-7867

# PROCEDURES FOR SPECIFIC EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

## I. BUILDING EVACUATION

In most instances, the decision to evacuate a building will be made as a function of events (e.g., the building is on fire), by building management, or the supervisor after consultation with the local fire or police departments. In the event of imminent danger, the supervisor in charge will order the evacuation of the building.

The decision to re-enter a building will be made by the same person who ordered the evacuation after consultations with the fire and police departments.

### A) Advance Preparation

1. Division work sites must have evacuation plans posted on office bulletin boards visible to all staff that includes how to evacuate, the designated assembly area, and the designated fire warden.

An evacuation assembly area must be established at each work location. The area should be a safe distance from the building to protect evacuees from broken glass or other debris in case of an explosion or earthquake.

2. Site managers must designate assembly areas or areas, both inside and outside the workplace, where employees should gather after evacuating. Assembly locations within the building are referred to as “areas of refuge.” Make sure your assembly areas have sufficient space to accommodate all of your employees. Exterior assembly areas, used when the building must be partially or completely evacuated, are typically located in parking lots or other open areas away from busy streets. Try and designate assembly areas so that you will be up-wind of your building from the most common or prevailing wind direction. Assembly area should also be clear of power lines and light/telephone poles, and not in the fire lanes (for emergency vehicles and personnel).
3. Supervisors are responsible for orienting new employees to the procedure and ensuring annual reviews of the procedures with all staff are coordinated.
4. Some work sites such as the Frontier Building, have scheduled evacuation drills. All work sites will prepare, schedule, and participate in periodic evacuation drills.
5. Locate and familiarize yourself with all fire extinguishers, fire alarm pull stations, and all other safety equipment.
6. Locate and identify the nearest stairwell exits in your common work areas.

## B) Things to do

1. Stay CALM.
2. Disconnect electrical equipment if time allows.
3. Take personal items (coats, purses, car keys) as you leave.
4. Walk to prevent injuries.
5. If you must move quickly, remove high heeled shoes.
6. When exiting on stairs, form two single file lines. If one line is moving more quickly, choose the line that you can keep up with and do not impede the progress of other people. You may need to form one line if fire or rescue personnel are entering the building on the same stairwell being used as the exit.
7. Assist elderly/disabled persons, and check to ensure everyone has evacuated. Designate an individual to assist any elderly or disabled persons.
8. Wait in the designated assembly area for further instructions.
9. Take a head count after the evacuation. Identify the names and last known locations of anyone not accounted for and pass them to the official in charge. Accounting for all employees following an evacuation is critical. Confusion in the assembly area can lead to delays in rescuing anyone trapped in the building, or unnecessary and dangerous search-and-rescue operations. When designating an assembly area, consider (and try to minimize) the possibility of employees interfering with rescue operations.
10. Establish a method to account for non-employees such as volunteers and clients.
11. Establish procedures for further evacuation in case the accident expands. This may consist of sending employees home by normal means or providing them with transportation to an offsite location.
12. Follow any special instructions from your supervisor or designated monitors.

### **CLOSE DOORS**

If fire, hazardous materials, or earthquake

### **OPEN DOORS**

If bomb threat

**Designated Assembly Area:**

**Designated Fire Warden:**

**Person to Assist Elderly/Disabled:**

## **II. FIRE**

### **A) Advance Preparation**

1. Appoint fire wardens/hall monitors to assist supervisors in the orderly evacuation of the building.
2. Fire wardens/hall monitors must be familiar with evacuation and fire procedures. The fire wardens/hall monitors will assist in supervising the steps outlined in sections B and C including evacuating personnel.
3. Generally, one warden/monitor for every 20 employees should be adequate, and the appropriate number of wardens/monitors should be available at all times during work hours.
4. Supervisors and fire wardens/hall monitors must be trained in complete workplace layout and various alternative escape routes. They must also be aware of employees with special needs who may require extra assistance, using the "buddy system," and hazardous areas to avoid during an emergency evacuation.
  - Buddy System - where a colleague or member of staff accompanies a handicapped or other person requiring assistance to the evacuation site. It is also a system that could be implemented for all employees to ensure everyone is alerted in during an emergency if evacuation is needed.
5. Evacuation routes and emergency exits must be:
  - Clearly marked and well lit;
  - Wide enough to accommodate the number of evacuating personnel;
  - Unobstructed and clear of debris at all times; and
  - Unlikely to expose evacuating personnel to additional hazards.

6. Post evacuation routes and emergency exits prominently for all employees to see.

**B) In case of fire, you should:**

1. Activate the emergency pull alarm at the nearest station and call 911 to notify local authorities.
2. If a fire can be put out with a hand extinguisher, do so, but avoid taking chances. If you decide to use an extinguisher, whenever possible, use the "buddy system" and have someone back you up.

**C) When an alarm sounds, you should:**

1. Follow the evacuation procedure established for your office.
2. The supervisor and fire wardens/hall monitors should quickly go through their designated area before evacuating to ensure everyone is aware of the fire alarm.
3. The last person should close all doors behind them and report to the assembly area. The person in charge should be notified as each area is evacuated.
4. Refer to the Building Evacuation Procedure in section I for guidelines on what to do following an evacuation.
5. When the alarm has been cleared, notification will be given when staff may return to the building.

**DO NOT OPEN OR  
TOUCH DOOR IF  
HOT (USE BACK OF  
HAND TO TEST FOR  
HEAT ON  
DOOR/PERIMETER)**

**III. EARTHQUAKE**

In the event of a major earthquake an order to evacuate the building will likely occur once an initial assessment of the safest evacuation route has been made.

**A) Do**

1. Take cover under desks, tables, in doorways, hallways, or against an inside wall until shock waves and initial aftershocks have ended.

2. Stay clear of windows, bookcases, file cabinets, overhead light fixtures, and any other objects that could either fall on you or shatter and cause cuts or injuries.
3. Turn off all electrical equipment.
4. Follow instructions from local authorities, building management, supervisors, or his/her designee for evacuation directions and other instructions.
5. Take your personal belongings such as coats, boots, hats, purses, keys, etc.
6. Assemble at the designated assembly area.

#### **B) Do Not**

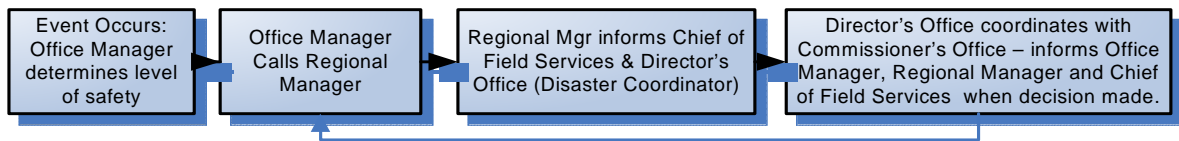
1. Panic or react in manner to cause alarm.
2. Use elevators.
3. Stand near windows.
4. Use telephones (unless instructed by emergency personnel).
5. Light matches or lighters (gas may be leaking).
6. Leave the building or assembly area unless instructed to do so.



#### **IV. REQUESTING OFFICE CLOSURE (severe weather, unsafe conditions, etc.)**

**A)** State offices may be closed only at the direction of the Governor, or the governor's designee, for the purposes of protecting the public safety and health. It is the State's administrative policy to keep offices open even in the most inclement weather. When necessary, the Governor will make a public announcement declaring with State offices are closed, the time of the closure, and the anticipated duration of the closure. There are many issues to take into consideration before and after making the decision to close a State office (such as, severity of the weather, road conditions, population served by the State office, etc.).

**B)** In the event there is severe weather or other extraordinary conditions where it is appropriate to close a State office, please follow the procedure below. To request closure of your local office:



If, in response to severe weather conditions or another emergency, public safety officials advise closing an office, the office manager or supervisor will immediately contact the regional manager and will then comply with the recommendation to close the office.

**C)** Employees must also adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Employees who are not on leave are expected to remain on duty or to report for work unless notified to leave the workplace or remain at home by their supervisor.
2. Staff will not remain in the office if and when it is closed.
3. In those instances when an employee is unable to come in to work due to severe weather conditions, they must contact their immediate supervisor.
4. Managers and supervisors may choose to implement flexible work schedules to minimize the driving hazards resulting from severe weather conditions. These situations must be arranged and approved by the supervisor.
5. All employees are expected to return to work as soon as they are notified that the office has reopened.

**D)** Although unlikely, if an extraordinary event has occurred (flooding, no power) and there is *imminent danger* (see insert below) to staff or the public, office managers are to secure the office, send all staff home immediately, and listen for radio announcements. The office managers must immediately inform the Director's Office of events.

*US Department of Labor Office of Safety defines IMMEDIATE DANGER as: ".....any conditions or practices in any place of employment which are such that **a danger exists which could reasonably be expected to cause death or serious physical harm immediately** or before the imminence of such danger can be eliminated through the enforcement procedures otherwise provided by this Act."*

*The following conditions must be met before a hazard becomes an imminent danger:*

- *There must be a threat of death or serious physical harm. "Serious physical harm" means that a part of the body is damaged so severely that it cannot be used or cannot be used very well.*
- *For a health hazard there must be a reasonable expectation that toxic substances or other health hazards are present and exposure to them will shorten life or cause substantial reduction in physical or mental efficiency. The harm caused by the health hazard does not have to happen immediately.*
- *The threat must be immediate or imminent. This means that you must believe that death or serious physical harm could occur within a short time, for example before OSHA could investigate the problem.*

The Division of Homeland Security has developed a special website for coastal communities that may be impacted by severe winter storms (see Fall Sea Storm link at <http://www.ak-prepared.com/>). This site has information available to the public concerning disaster preparedness.

## V. BOMB THREATS RECEIVED BY TELEPHONE

Telephone threats offer an opportunity to obtain more detailed information including the caller's identity. When bomb threats are received by telephone, they are made for two apparent reasons:

- 1) A caller may have a definite knowledge of a bomb's placement and may want to minimize the potential for death and injury, or
- 2) The caller wants to disrupt normal operations and create panic in a specific location.

### A) Preparation

It is very important to prepare in advance for a bomb threat call. This can help minimize the potential for panic and may help the office receiving the call to identify the caller making the threat. Offices should be prepared to suspend regular work hours to ensure the safety of employees, clients, and the general public.

- 1) Education and knowledge of security procedures are essential to preparedness. Conduct a meeting with staff and establish clear levels of authority. The most senior supervisor will be making the decisions on the

course of actions to be taken during the threat. Select an alternate to act for the decision making supervisor in case of his/her absence.

- 2) Ensure Bomb Threat Checklists (see page 10) are available at the area of incoming calls and that staff are familiar with the Bomb Threat Checklist.

## **B) The Threat**

Receptionists should be instructed in advance to do the following if a bomb threat is received:



- 1) The call or bomb threat should be taken seriously.
- 2) Stay calm.
- 3) Check caller ID for the return phone number and record the number immediately.
- 4) Immediately start the Bomb Threat Checklist (see pages 11 and 12).
- 5) Keep the caller talking and on the line. Ask him or her to repeat the message several times, and gather additional information. Write down the threat or comments verbatim, using the callers own words. Do not hang up on the caller under any circumstances.
- 6) Listen closely to the voice of the caller and note characteristics on the Bomb Threat Checklist.
- 7) Pay attention to any background noises that may assist the authorities, such as street noise, bar noise, home noise, etc.
- 8) If the caller does not provide specifics about the bomb's location and time of detonation, ask the caller when the bomb is set to go off and where it is located.
- 9) You may want to advise the caller that the building is occupied and that death and injury to innocent people could occur.
- 10) Notify your direct supervisor, the supervisor in charge, or his/her designee about the threat – do not notify others unless instructed to do so to minimize panic.

### **C) The Authorities and Management**

- 1) The supervisor in charge should decide on the proper response, such as an evacuation. Use common sense; if the threat is specific and a short time is indicated before the bomb will explode, get everyone out of the building as quickly as possible.
- 2) The supervisor in charge should contact the local authorities (police, troopers, fire department) to discuss the threat, building evacuation plan, and organized building search.
- 3) The employee who received the bomb threat should remain available to local authorities for questioning – all documentation pertaining to the threat should be available and ready when the authorities arrive at the scene.

### **D) The Search**

The most effective way to conduct a building search is with a team comprised of local authorities and building occupants. The occupants are familiar with the areas to be searched and the authorities have experience to follow specific search techniques. A search should not be conducted until local authorities arrive and meet with the supervisor in charge.

### **E) Building Evacuation**

See section I.

### **F) Additional information**

<http://www.diversifiedriskmanagement.com/articles/bomb-threats.html>

# TELEPHONE BOMB THREAT CHECKLIST

**Keep calm -- Do not excite others -- Signal for supervisor**

If a bomb threat is received, **call 911 IMMEDIATELY** and follow this checklist. Tell 911 you received a bomb threat – they will advise you appropriately and ask for information about the threat such as the following:

**Time call received:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time call terminated:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Caller ID Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Exact words of the caller:**

**Background Noise:**

**Delay call if possible**

- Give a co-worker a signal to listen in. Ask the caller to repeat statements.
- Try to allow time for the call to be traced.

**Questions you should ask:**

- What time is bomb set to go off?
- Where is bomb located? Get specific
- What kind of bomb is it?
- What does the bomb look like? Write down description

**Keep track of voice description and note:**

- Do you recognize the voice?
- Is there unusual phrasing or an accent?

- |  |                                   |  |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male            | <input type="checkbox"/> Refined  | <input type="checkbox"/> Rough             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female          | <input type="checkbox"/> Accent   | <input type="checkbox"/> Throat Clearing   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calm            | <input type="checkbox"/> Laughter | <input type="checkbox"/> Cracking Voice    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nervous         | <input type="checkbox"/> Crying   | <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy Breathing   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Old             | <input type="checkbox"/> Excited  | <input type="checkbox"/> Hoarse            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Young           | <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid    | <input type="checkbox"/> Slurred           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middle-aged     | <input type="checkbox"/> Slow     | <input type="checkbox"/> Whispered         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guess age _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Normal   | <input type="checkbox"/> Speech Impediment |

