



There's More To Our Shore!

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FIRE DRILLS

On July 1, 2002, the State of Wisconsin began operating under a newly adopted fire code. As a part of this new code the state adopted by reference the provisions of the National Fire Prevention Association Fire Prevention Code also known as NFPA 1. One of the resultant changes was that many businesses that were formerly not required to conduct fire drills are now required to do so.

The requirements for fire drills for various occupancies found in NFPA 1 chapter 8, which is the section of the Fire Code which deals with fire safety in individual types of occupancies. This section of the Fire Code requires that fire drills be conducted in many commercial occupancies.

As the owner or operator of a business within the State of Wisconsin, you may be responsible to schedule regular fire drills and to maintain records of the drills which you do conduct. This memo is provided to you to assist you complying with the requirements of this code.

Which Businesses Must Conduct Fire Drills? Under the provisions of the new Fire Code, many businesses must conduct regular fire drills with the owner or operator of the business responsible for conducting the drills and maintaining the records of the drills. A complete list of which types of business are required to conduct fire drills follows.

What Is Meant By “Regularly Scheduled?” In some cases, the code does not specify intervals for the required fire drills. In these cases, it leaves the designation of the length of the interval up to the local fire department. In the case of other types of businesses, a specific interval is designated by the code. The intervals for various businesses that require fire drills are found below.

What Records Must Be Maintained? Written records of all drills conducted within the last five years must be maintained on file at the business. The records must include:

- The name and address of the business
- The person who conducted the fire drill
- The date and time when the drill was conducted
- The elapsed time required to vacate the premises
- The weather conditions and any other special circumstances
- Notes regarding any problems with the drill or areas of needed improvement regarding

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the drill

- The signature of the person responsible for the drill and the signature of the owner or operator of the business

What Constitutes a Successful Fire Drill? With regard to fire drills, it is far more importance that participants learn to evacuate in an orderly fashion than in an overly rapid fashion. Therefore, in evaluating a fire drill, emphasis should be placed on orderly evacuation rather than on speed.

What Is a Fire Evacuation or Relocation Plan? Any business that is required to conduct regular fire drills must develop a written plan which designates procedures that will be followed in the event of an emergency. This plan must indicate the responsibilities of all employees and must designate a specific safe location to which personnel will be evacuated. The owner or operator of the business must take steps to ensure that all employees are trained in the provisions of the plan. The written plan must be kept on the premises in a place where it is accessible to employees to review.

What Is Meant By “Occupancy Load?” The term, “occupancy load,” refers to the total number of people permitted by code to be in a building or a portion of a building at any given time. The occupancy load is dependancy upon the size of the space in question as well as upon its design and construction. It is generally greater than the average or expected number of people found in the space in question.

Are There Any Special Requirements for Specific Types of Businesses? Yes, each type of business has slightly different requirements. They are listed below by occupancy type. If your business does not fall within the scope of any of the occupancy types listed below, you are not required to conduct regular fire drills.

Assembly Businesses: This category includes churches, bars, restaurants, theaters, halls, and sports viewing venues.

- If the Occupancy load of your business is over 1,000, you must have trained crowd control supervisors at a ratio of 1 to 250 occupants. (*Places of worship are exempted from this requirements.*)
- Employees must be trained and drilled in the duties they are to perform in the event of an emergency.
- Employees must be trained in the use of fire extinguishers.
- In theaters, an audible announcement or a projected image must be provided at the beginning of each program to notify the patrons of the location of fire exits.
- **Theaters, Halls, Sports Viewing Venues:** *Drills will be conducted once per month.*
- **Churches, Bars, Restaurants, & Others:** *Drills will be conducted once per year.*

Day Care Centers:

- Drills will be conducted once per month. Drills scheduled during periods of inclement weather may be deferred until the weather improves. However, regardless of the use of

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this deferment, twelve drills per year must be conducted and an attempt should be made to space them out as much as possible throughout the year.

- All occupants of the building must evacuate during a drill.
- All occupants are to be evacuated to a predetermined safe location.
- Fire Drills should be unannounced.

Health care Facilities:

- A written fire safety plan and plan for evacuation and relocation must be developed.
- Employees shall be trained in their duties for patient evacuation and relocation.
- Drills will include the transmission of an audible fire alarm signal and the simulation of an emergency. Between 9:00 pm and 6:00 am, a coded signal may be used for the drill rather than an audible alarm
- Drills will be conducted quarterly and on each shift.

Residential Board And Care Facilities:

- A Written plan for protection of residents in the event of a fire must be developed.
- Employees must be trained in their duties for resident protection.
- Residents shall be trained in their role in fire prevention and their responsibilities in the event of a fire.
- Drills shall be conducted at least every other month. Twice during the calendar year the drill must take place at night while the residents are sleeping.
- Drills must include the evacuation of all residents and personnel to a safe assembly point.
- Drills must provide residents with experience in use of all potential exits from the building (with the exception of windows).
- Residents must have practice in opening windows and signaling for help.

Ambulatory Health Care Centers:

- A Written plan for protection of residents in the event of a fire must be developed.
- Employees must be trained in their duties for resident protection.
- Drills shall be conducted quarterly on each shift.
- Drills will include the transmission of an fire alarm signal and the simulation of an emergency. Between 9:00 pm and 6:00 am, a coded signal may be used for the drill rather than an audible alarm
- Employees shall be instructed in the use of fire extinguishers.

Hotels and Dormitories:

- Employees are to be instructed and drilled as to their responsibilities in the event of a fire.
- Drills shall be held at least quarterly
- Employees shall be trained in the use of fire extinguishers.
- **Dormitories:**
 - Drills should be unannounced and should take place at various times during the day and night.
 - As a part of the drill, all personnel shall be relocated to a predetermined safe location.

Mercantile (Retail) Businesses: (Applies only to Mercantile Businesses of greater than 3,000 ft²)

- Employees shall be trained in the use of fire extinguishers.

- Drills should be at expected and unexpected times.
- All personnel shall evacuate to a predetermined safe location.
- Drills in Mercantile Businesses with between **3,000 and 30,000 ft²** shall be conducted once per year. In Mercantile Businesses with **greater than 30,000 ft²** they shall be conducted once per quarter.

Business Occupancies: Includes offices, auto dealerships, clinics (medical, dental, chiropractic, etc).

- Designated employees of all businesses shall be trained in the use of fire extinguishers.
- The requirement for fire drills applies only to Businesses that have an occupancy load (including customers and clients) of greater than 500 or greater than 100 above the ground floor.
 - Drills are to take place at expected and unexpected times.
 - All persons in the business at the time of the drill must participate.
 - All personnel shall evacuate to a predetermined safe location.
 - Drills shall take place quarterly.

What If I Need Assistance in Preparing a Fire Evacuation Plan Or Conducting a Fire Drill? Personnel from the Superior Fire Department are available to assist you with preparing a fire evacuation plan and with planning a fire drill.

**If you have any questions regarding the requirements of this code as it applies to your business,
please feel free to contact one of the fire inspectors at the number listed above.**