



FIRE EVACUATION PLAN GUIDELINES

General Fire Regulations 2010 require the occupier of a specified building (*Refer to the definition of a Specified Building in Attachment 1 of this guideline*) to submit for approval to the Chief Officer of the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS), an Evacuation Plan (EP) for the evacuation of the building **in the case of fire**. It should be noted that non-specified buildings do not require formal approval of EP's by the Chief Officer under TFS legislation but TFS may endorse such a plan. In cases where a request is made to have a non-required EP endorsed it must have been developed in accordance with this guideline.

The following information prescribes the minimum acceptable standard for EP approval by the Chief Officer. Specific requirements for emergencies in buildings are detailed in Australian Standards AS 3745 – 2010 'Planning for emergencies in facilities' (and where applicable AS 4083 – 2010 'Planning for emergencies - Health care facilities') and in all cases the relevant sections of the standard/s must be adequately addressed.

Important note: While TFS legislation is limited to the approval of EP's in the case of fire only, the TFS strongly recommends to all building occupiers that when developing an EP for their building/s, appropriate consideration is given to the range of matters discussed in AS 3745 – 2010.

In particular thorough consideration should be given to the following important matters:

- the formation of an Emergency Planning Committee to take responsibility for the development, implementation and maintenance of the EP;
- the identification of the range of emergency events that may affect people in the building/s;
- pre and post emergency action to be taken by the Emergency Control Organisation (ECO);
- a strategy for communicating with neighbouring buildings/tenancies, particularly where there are different tenancies fronting common areas within an arcade and the like;
- emergency vehicle access; and
- the use of specialist staff to assist in an emergency such as security, reception and technical personnel.

For full details about these matters refer to AS 3745 – 2010 'Planning for emergencies in facilities'.

Prior to submitting an EP for approval, each of the following matters will need to be considered, and where relevant, suitably addressed in your plan. At all times a worst case scenario methodology should be adopted.

Plan considerations

The format of the EP is to be logical and easy to follow and to assist with this aim each of the following objectives must be considered:

- The purpose and scope of the plan;
- The plan clearly identifies the building/s to which it applies and is relevant to its type, size and the nature of its use;
- The arrangements to be put in place to ensure an efficient emergency response; and
- Activities for preparing for, and prevention of emergencies such as training and maintenance.

Plan development - *For specific details refer to AS 3745 – 2010.*

These EP guidelines are generic in nature and apply to all types of buildings, so it is important to ensure that when developing your EP you capture those aspects that are relevant to your specific circumstances. For example, a small single story child care centre that has 1 or 2 staff may only require a Chief Warden and that person would undertake all tasks, where a multi story building may require a full ECO including a Chief Warden, Deputy Chief Warden/s, Area/Floor Warden/s, Warden/s and possibly Communication Officers and Runners.

When developing your plan, each of the following matters must be addressed to the degree necessary:

- Identification of potential fire emergencies that are likely to impact your building/s or building occupants;
- The ECO structure;
- Staffing levels, shift arrangements and hours of use;
- All tenants in a multi-tenancy building such as a shopping complex, office block or mixed retail building are to be made aware of their responsibilities within the evacuation plan, key staff members from those tenancies are to be involved in the EP development and allocated tasks as required. They are also to be involved in ECO training where relevant and participate in all practice evacuations;
- Strategies for raising an alarm of fire;
- Evacuation routes and exits;
- Alternatives to total evacuation;
- Strategies for providing assistance to persons with disabilities and others requiring assistance during a fire emergency;
- Assembly area/s;
- Training; and
- Plan review and maintenance.

Identification of potential fire emergencies

In developing the plan, consideration must be given to likely fire events (both internal and external to the building) that may impact a building or its occupants and where appropriate, specifically address these in the plan. Events such as fire and smoke within the building, significant electrical failure, bushfire and alternate exits strategies are among those things to be considered.

For further guidance in this area refer to Section 3.2 of AS 3745 – 2010.

ECO Structure and identification

The appropriate number of ECO personnel required to manage identified events is to be clearly established and responsibilities and key tasks are to be assigned. The ECO makeup along with their specific responsibilities are to be clearly stated in the EP.

During an evacuation it is also beneficial if each ECO member involved in managing an emergency (ie. Chief Warden, Deputy Chief Warden, Area/Floor Wardens and Wardens [whichever combination is relevant]) is appropriately identified and is easily recognised by the building occupants and the responding Brigade.

The EP must specify the method to be used for this purpose and acceptable examples include helmets, caps, hats, tabards and vests.

Once the method of identification is determined it should be inscribed with the wearer's official title eg. Chief Warden. The following colours shall be used to identify each ECO function:

- *White* – for Chief Warden/Deputy Chief Warden (and Communication Officer).
- *Yellow* – for Area/Floor Warden.
- *Red* – for Warden.

For more information refer to Attachment 2 of this guideline and Section 5 of AS 3745 – 2010.

Raising the alarm

An appropriate method is to be used to warn the occupants of an alarm of fire and may be in the form of a siren, sounder, whistle, PA, fire alarm or warning system &c. Once identified, the selected method is to be clearly identified in the plan.

Use of occupant warning systems in evacuations

Evacuation plans must contain clear and specific operating procedures where the building incorporates an occupant or emergency warning system and the system is intended to be used by the ECO to manage an evacuation. In such cases the system must be fitted with a PA and controllable alert/evacuation tones.

If the intention is to not use the installed system to manage an evacuation, the alert signal shall be set to '0' seconds which causes the system to go directly into evacuation mode upon the activation of a fire alarm.

Where the use of the occupant warning system is included as part of the EP strategy, a copy of the approved procedure must be located at the emergency control point.

Staff levels and building use

Staffing levels, shift arrangements and where applicable the hours of use are to be considered when developing the EP. Circumstances where a building or part of a building is used for different purposes out of normal business hours (eg. a school's gym is used in the evening by a local community basketball team) are also to be specifically addressed.

For more information refer to Section 4 of AS 3745 – 2010.

Evacuation routes and exits

Evacuation routes and exits relating to the building/s must be identified and assessed for the likely effects that an emergency may have on them before choosing the most appropriate evacuation route/s.

Evacuation diagrams

Evacuation diagrams provide general information about the building layout, evacuation routes, and the location of emergency exits, portable fire fighting equipment, hose reels, fire hydrants, communication equipment etc.

It is recommended that evacuation diagrams be displayed particularly for larger industrial sites and complex buildings where hydrants and hose reels are located inside the building or where a risk assessment has deemed them necessary. Evacuation diagrams are not required for smaller, relatively straight forward buildings.

For further advice about evacuation diagrams contact your local Building Safety office located at the regional headquarters buildings in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie or contact 6230 8600.

Where used, evacuation diagrams are to be set out in accordance with Section 3.5 of AS 3745 - 2010 and displayed in the manner provided in Appendix E.

Emergency action guides

An Emergency Action Guide (EAG's) is used as a prompt for occupants who have been asked to evacuate or are confronted with fire or smoke in a building. They are particularly useful in providing specific advice to visitors or others who may be unfamiliar with the surroundings.

Emergency Action Guides should provide clear and simple instructions about the actions one should take to raise an alarm or to evacuate a building and should be posted in prominent locations around the building/s such as common areas, sleeping areas and toilets. TFS has prepared 2 templates for this purpose which are accessible on the TFS web site.

Links to "Guide 1" and "Guide 2" are included on the EP web page for your use as required. For details on the EP web page go to 'Information' on pg 4 of this guideline.

Alternatives to a total evacuation

In some instances in buildings such as hospitals, aged care facilities and multi story buildings, a lateral or horizontal evacuation into a smoke or fire compartment or from one compartment to another may be used as an alternative to a total evacuation, particularly as an interim measure.

Where an alternative to a total evacuation is proposed, it is the responsibility of the occupier of the building to provide the following evidence at the time the plan is submitted for approval:

- Fire and smoke separation/compartimentation complies with the Building Code of Australia;
- An appropriate communication system is in place to direct occupants within the building such as an Emergency Warning and Intercommunication System (EWIS) or a PA System; and
- Each Warden has received specific training and is considered competent to undertake the allocated tasks.

Where the above evidence is unsuitable or not provided, the TFS Chief Officer will not support any alternative to a total evacuation.

Persons requiring assistance

Building occupants with a disability or who may require special assistance due to their age or situation must be considered when developing the EP. Tactics such as allocating persons to assist these occupants to evacuate or to provide shelter in place need to be developed, tested and detailed.

Assembly area

Where appropriate, at least one designated assembly area should be identified and all building occupants need to be made aware of the location/s.

When selecting a site, the safety of all evacuees should be of prime importance, therefore the assembly area needs to be sufficiently distant from the emergency for the protection of evacuees and to ensure clear access for emergency service vehicles.

Training

All ECO members shall be trained so as to enable them to competently fulfil responsibilities and to undertake the allocated tasks set out in the EP. Initial training should be specific to the allocated tasks and delivered by a competent person.

Ongoing ECO maintenance training may only need to involve participation in routine practice evacuation exercises however training needs are to be reviewed regularly and the appropriate strategy implemented.

For more information refer to Section 6 of AS 3745 – 2010.

Plan review and maintenance

The EP must be routinely tested and reviewed for adequacy. Where any deficiencies are identified whether they are a result of staffing changes, changes to the use of the building or alterations made to the building, the plan shall be reviewed and amended accordingly. Where changes are made to the approved EP, it shall be resubmitted to the Chief Officer for approval.

For more information refer to Section 8 of AS 3745 – 2010.

EP approval process

Once the plan has been developed, it should be forwarded to the TFS for consideration. If the plan meets the intent of this guideline and those of AS 3745, in-principle approval will be granted. Final approval will be subject to a successful practice being conducted which must be done in accordance with the in-principally approved plan. This final practice will be assessed for suitability by an officer of the Tasmania Fire Service.

Before applying to conduct the final practice, you must first ensure that all ECO members are made aware of their responsibilities and are competent to undertake the nominated tasks. It is strongly recommended you conduct one or more informal practice sessions beforehand.

For more information on practice evacuations and exercises refer to Section 7 of AS 3745 – 2010.

Information

To discuss evacuation planning, please call TFS Building Safety on 6230 8600 or visit our web site at www.fire.tas.gov.au - then 'fire safety and you' - then 'in the workplace' – then 'evacuation plans'.

Meaning of “specified building”

(1) the *General Fire Regulations 2010* defines a specified building as:

- (a) a building that is capable of accommodating more than 200 persons, as estimated or determined in accordance with Table D1.13 of the BCA;
- (b) a building that, under an occupancy permit issued under the *Building Act 2000*, more than 200 persons are entitled to use at any one time;
- (c) a building that is used to provide residential accommodation as part of an educational institution;
- (d) a building that is used to provide residential accommodation for persons requiring medical, psychiatric or geriatric care;
- (e) a building that is used to provide supported accommodation for persons with physical, developmental or psychiatric disabilities;
- (f) a building that is used as or for a hostel, boarding house, guesthouse, lodging house or backpacker accommodation, being a building capable of accommodating 6 or more guests;
- (g) a residential part of a hotel or motel, being a part capable of accommodating 6 or more guests;
- (h) a child care centre within the meaning of the *Child Care Act 2001*;
- (i) a detention centre;
- (j) a healthcare building;
- (k) a residential aged care facility;
- (l) a school;
- (m) a special fire hazard building within the meaning of the Building Regulations;
- (n) a building that is fitted with a fire protection system monitored by the Fire Service;
- (o) a building in respect of which a declaration under sub regulation (2)(a) is in effect.

Roles and responsibilities

Each Warden shall have clearly defined duties and responsibilities relevant to the requirements of the building. The following schedule of duties and responsibilities are typically those identified for the various ECO members but may need to be varied according to individual circumstances.

For specific information refer to Section 5 of AS 3745 – 2010.

Chief Warden

On becoming aware of an emergency, the Chief Warden shall take the following actions:

1. Respond and take appropriate control of the situation;
2. Ascertain the nature of the emergency and implement appropriate action;
3. Ensure that the relevant emergency service has been notified (000 zero);
Note: 000 zero is only to be used in emergencies and should not be dialed in practice situations
4. Ensure that Floor and/or Area Wardens are advised of the situation, as appropriate;
5. If necessary, after assessing the situation, initiate action appropriate to the situation in accordance with the EP and have entry to the affected areas controlled;
6. Monitor the situation and ensure any action taken is recorded in an incident log;
7. Brief the Senior Emergency Service Officer upon arrival on the type, scope and location of the emergency and the status of the evacuation, and thereafter assist the officer as required; and
8. Any other actions considered to be necessary or as directed by the Senior Emergency Service Officer.

Deputy Chief Warden

The Deputy Chief Warden shall assume the responsibilities normally carried out by the Chief Warden if the Chief Warden is unavailable, and at other times, assist as required.

Floor or Area Wardens

On hearing an alarm or on becoming aware of an emergency, the Floor or Area Wardens shall take the following actions:

1. Implement the emergency procedures for their floor or area;
2. Check to ensure that the relevant emergency service has been notified (000 zero);
Note: 000 zero is only to be used in emergencies and should not be dialed in practice situations
3. Direct Wardens to check their allocated floor or area and report on any abnormal situation;
4. Commence evacuation if the circumstances on their floor or area warrant it;
5. Communicate with the Chief Warden by whatever means available and act on instructions;
6. Advise the Chief Warden as soon as possible of the circumstances and action taken;
7. Co-opt persons as required to assist a Warden during an emergency; and
8. Confirm that Warden activities have been completed and report back to the Chief Warden or the Senior Emergency Service Officer if the Chief Warden is not contactable.

Wardens

Persons selected as Wardens may be required to carry out a number of activities as set out in the EP, including:

1. Act as Floor or Area Wardens;
2. Operate the communication(s) system in place;

3. Check to ensure fire doors and smoke doors are properly closed;
4. Close or open (unlock) other doors in accordance with the EP procedures;
5. Search the effected floor or area to ensure all persons have evacuated the area. This function is of greater importance than a later physical count of those evacuated;
6. Ensure orderly flow of persons into protected areas, e.g. stairwells;
7. Assist occupants with disabilities or other requiring assistance;
8. Act as leader of groups moving to nominated assembly areas; and
9. Report to the Floor or Area Warden on completion of required activities.

Communications Officer/s

The Communications Officer, on becoming aware of an emergency, shall take the following actions:

1. Ascertain the nature and location of the emergency;
2. Confirm that the relevant emergency service has been notified (000 zero);
Note: 000 zero is only to be used in emergencies and should not be dialed in practice situations
3. Notify appropriate ECO members;
4. Transmit instructions and information between the Chief Warden, Floor/Area Wardens and building occupants;
5. Record a log of the events that occur during the incident; and
6. Act as directed by the Chief Warden.