FIRE EVACUATION PLAN GUIDELINES

A fire safety guideline for the preparation of building fire evacuation plans in Tasmania.

fire.tas.gov.au

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Tasmania Fire Service

Tasmanian Government

Fire Evacuation Plan Guidelines

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1. Introduction

The Fire Evacuation Plan Guidelines has been developed under Regulation 21 of the *General Fire Regulations 2021* to support the effective planning, implementation, and maintenance of fire evacuation arrangements for buildings and facilities in Tasmania. It is intended to be read in conjunction with Australian Standard 3745 *Planning for Emergencies in Facilities* (AS 3745) and, where applicable, Australian Standard 4083 *Planning for Emergencies – Health Care Facilities* (AS 4083). These standards provide nationally recognised emergency planning principles, which this guideline applies within the context of Tasmanian legislation and local conditions.

The guideline provides practical direction to assist building owners, managers, and occupants to understand their roles and responsibilities during a fire emergency. It outlines key principles, roles, and procedures for developing, reviewing, and implementing fire evacuation plans in a way that supports building occupant safety, lawful compliance and orderly evacuation. While minimum requirements are established, the guideline encourages a risk-based approach, recognising that higher levels of fire safety may be necessary to reflect the specific use, layout, and risk profile of individual buildings. This approach promotes improved preparedness, safety, and confidence for all occupants.

1.1 Application

This guideline applies to all specified buildings and facilities where fire evacuation plans are required by legislation or is necessary to ensure occupant safety. It provides direction for preparing fire evacuation plans that align with the *Fire Service Act 1979*, associated Regulations, relevant Australian Standards, and Work Health and Safety obligations. The guideline applies equally to new and existing specified buildings, regardless of size, function, or occupancy levels.

The principles and processes outlined are intended for use by:

- Building owners and occupiers
- Facility managers and safety coordinators
- Emergency control organisations
- Designers, consultants, and fire safety professionals

Compliance with this guideline assists Responsible Persons in meeting their legal obligations and ensures fire evacuation plans are consistent with a building's approved fire safety features, including exits, occupant warning systems, and fire protection measures. Where any conflict arises between this guideline and legislative requirements, the legislation prevails.

This document provides general guidance and does not replace or override statutory requirements. It should be applied alongside relevant laws, codes, and standards and may require adaptation to suit specific building designs, occupancy characteristics, or risk levels. Specialist advice should be sought for complex or high-risk buildings, including accommodation facilities, hospitals, aged care facilities, and high-rise buildings.

The application of this guideline supports a consistent and structured approach to fire evacuation planning that prioritises life safety, clear roles, and effective communication. In doing so, it helps ensure that evacuation procedures are properly planned, documented, communicated, practiced, and regularly reviewed, reducing confusion, minimising risk, and supporting efficient emergency response.

1.2 Definitions

For the purpose of this guideline, the following terms are defined to ensure clarity and consistency of interpretation.

- **Assembly area** – A designated safe location outside the building where occupants gather after evacuating, allowing for headcounts and communication with emergency services.
- **Building owner** – The individual or entity that owns the building and holds ultimate responsibility for ensuring the building meets all statutory fire safety obligations.
- **Chief warden** – The person responsible for managing the emergency response within a building or facility, including coordination of wardens and communication with emergency services.
- **Emergency Control Organisation (ECO)** – A structured group of trained personnel responsible for implementing the emergency response procedures, including evacuation and communication activities.
- **Emergency Planning Committee (EPC) -** Responsible for the development, implementation and maintenance of the fire evacuation plan.
- **Fire evacuation plan (FEP)** – A documented plan that outlines the actions to be taken by building occupants in the event of a fire or alarm of fire requiring evacuation.
- **Evacuation diagram** – A visual representation displayed within the building that shows the layout, exits, assembly areas, and equipment relevant to emergency fire evacuation.
- **Fire safety systems** – The collection of active and passive systems installed in a building to detect, control, or suppress fire and protect occupants (for example, sprinklers, alarms, fire doors, and extinguishers).
- **Occupant** – Any person present within the building, including staff, residents, visitors, contractors, and members of the public.
- **Responsible person** – The individual nominated by the building owner or employer who has day-to-day responsibility for ensuring that fire safety and fire evacuation arrangements are maintained and implemented. This may be the building owner and/or occupier.
- **Warden** – A member of the ECO appointed to assist with implementing fire evacuation procedures and directing occupants to safety.

Other definitions can be found in AS 3745 and AS 4083.

1.3 Responsibilities

A clear understanding of responsibilities is essential to ensure an effective and coordinated response during a fire emergency. Each role must be properly defined, communicated, and supported through appropriate training and procedures.

1.3.1 Building owner

The building owner holds responsibility for the provision and maintenance of fire safety measures within the building. The owner must ensure that:

- A current and compliant fire evacuation plan is developed and implemented.
- The plan aligns with the building's fire safety features and relevant legislation.
- Fire safety systems, such as alarms and exits, are maintained in good working order.
- Adequate resources are provided for training, signage, and fire evacuation equipment.
- Any changes to the building's layout, use, or occupancy are reflected in the plan.

Building owners may delegate operational tasks to facility managers or responsible persons but remain legally accountable for overall compliance.

1.3.2 Building occupier

The building occupier that may be a responsible person or facility manager, ensures that fire evacuation arrangements are in place and effective on a daily basis. They must:

- Ensure an EPC is established and functions consistent with the requirements in AS 3745.
- Implement and maintain the fire evacuation plan.
- Coordinate regular practice evacuation drills and record outcomes.
- Ensure all occupants are familiar with fire evacuation procedures.
- Liaise with fire authorities and service providers as required.
- Review and update the plan following any changes to the building or its use.

This role serves as the primary link between the building owner, building occupants, and emergency services during the planning stages.

1.3.3 Emergency control organisation (ECO)

The ECO manages the on-site response to an emergency and ensures the orderly fire evacuation of occupants. Its responsibilities include:

- Activating emergency procedures when required.
- Directing occupants to designated exits and assembly areas.
- Check all areas of the building to confirm the fire evacuation is complete.
- Assisting people with evacuation impairments or mobility limitations.

- Communicating with emergency services and providing key information.

The ECO must be properly structured, trained, and equipped to perform these duties effectively.

Further information on the ECO is available in AS 3745.

1.3.4 Building occupants

All occupants including visitors have a duty to cooperate with the building's fire evacuation procedures. They should:

- Familiarise themselves with exit routes and assembly areas.
- Follow directions from wardens or emergency personnel during a fire evacuation.
- Avoid using lifts unless specifically instructed by emergency services.
- Report any hazards, damaged equipment, or blocked exits to management.

Participation in practice evacuation drills is required to ensure everyone understands their role during an emergency.

2. Writing a fire evacuation plan

A fire evacuation plan provides the foundation for an effective emergency response. It must clearly outline the actions to be taken in the event of a fire and specify the roles, responsibilities, and resources necessary to ensure occupant safety.

2.1 Content of the plan

A compliant fire evacuation plan should include, at a minimum, the following components:

- **Building details** – Name, address, occupancy type, operating hours, number of floors, and key contact information.
- **Emergency contact numbers** – Fire services, police, ambulance, and other relevant agencies.
- **Roles and responsibilities** – Details of the building owner, responsible person, and ECO members.
- **Evacuation procedures** – Step-by-step actions for initiating and managing a fire evacuation, including re-entry.
- **After-hours ECO arrangements** – coordination arrangements after-hours and where a building is hired for other events.
- **Fire detection and protection systems** – Description of installed fire safety equipment and its location.
- **Fire evacuation routes and assembly areas** – Identification of primary and alternative exit paths and designated safe gathering areas.
- **Procedures for vulnerable occupants** – Strategies for assisting individuals with evacuation impairments or mobility challenges.
- **Communication methods** – How alarms, public address systems, and manual notifications are used during emergencies. How ECO members will communicate with each other during emergencies.
- **Training and drills** – Frequency, format, and record-keeping requirements for practice evacuations.
- **Review and maintenance** – Processes for updating the plan and verifying its effectiveness.

2.2 Use of fire evacuation plan templates

Tasmania Fire Service have produced a fire evacuation template to assist in preparing fire evacuation plans. You may choose to use the template as a guide in preparing a fire evacuation plan suitable for your building occupancy and use. The plan must be specific to the building's design, occupancy type, and fire risks.

2.3 ECO management

Details must be provided in the fire evacuation plan about the structure and members of the ECO including:

- Clearly list all members of the Emergency Control Organisation (ECO), including each position and its corresponding responsibilities.
- Specify the identification that ECO members will wear to ensure they are easily recognised during an emergency. Identification must align with the colour requirements set out in the relevant Australian Standard and may include items such as helmets, caps, tabards, or vests. This assists occupants and firefighters in identifying key ECO personnel during fire emergencies.
- Ensure the titles of all ECO positions match those defined in AS 3745.
- Include procedures for how ECO roles will be filled when designated members are absent.
- Describe how ECO members will communicate with one another during an emergency (e.g. verbal, two-way radios, internal communication systems, or other approved methods).

For more information on ECO colour and identification requirements, refer to Section 5: Emergency Control Organisation (ECO) of AS 3745.

2.4 Emergency warning and intercommunication systems (EWIS)

For buildings fitted with a EWIS that support staged fire evacuation through fire compartments, manual mode may only be used by a EWIS-trained Warden when strict criteria are met. These conditions help ensure the safety of all occupants and support appropriate coordination with the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS).

Chief warden responsibilities

- The Chief Warden must remain at the Control Point—the FDCIE/FIP and/or the EWIS panel—until TFS arrives, provided it is safe to do so.
- If the Chief Warden must leave before TFS arrival and no other trained Warden is available to assume control, they must provide activation details to TFS via Triple Zero (000) to ensure TFS receives accurate and current information on arrival.

(For further guidance on Control Points, refer to AS 3745, Section 4.2.4: Control and Coordination.)

Important safety note - Once the EWIS transitions into ‘evacuation mode’, it must not be silenced, isolated, or altered unless specifically authorised by the attending fire officer.

Key requirements for EWIS use in buildings

Training and Operation

- Only trained ECO members may operate the EWIS.

- Operating instructions displayed at the EWIS panel must match the instructions in the fire evacuation plan.

When the EWIS must remain in automatic or evacuation mode

The EWIS must stay in *automatic* or *evacuation* mode (and must not be placed into manual mode) in any of the following circumstances:

- A detector has activated due to an actual or suspected fire and there is no EWIS trained ECO member available to coordinate an evacuation.
- More than one detector head has activated and there is no EWIS trained ECO member available to coordinate an evacuation.
- A detector in a concealed space has activated and the area cannot be inspected and there is no EWIS trained ECO member available to coordinate an evacuation.
- Any incident involving the smell of smoke, burning odour, smoke haze, or similar conditions—including dust and there is no EWIS trained ECO member available to coordinate an evacuation.
- The activated detector head cannot be located and there is no EWIS trained ECO member available to coordinate an evacuation.
- If only one ECO member is present in the building.
- No ECO members are trained in EWIS operation.

When manual mode may be used

A EWIS-trained warden may place the system into manual mode *only if all* the following requirements are satisfied:

- There has been a confirmed fire, and a trained EWIS ECO member is staging a fire evacuation based on priorities.
- The single activated detector head has been located, and there are no visible or obvious signs of fire.
- The area has been thoroughly investigated.
- The EWIS system is required to be placed in manual mode to activate certain functionality e.g. PA system use.
- The Chief Warden is certain that the activation is a false alarm, and
- A warden must remain in the area of the activation (if safe to do so) to continuously monitor conditions until the responding fire officer has investigated the location.

Important safety note - If these conditions cannot be confirmed—or if the Chief Warden is uncertain about EWIS operation—the EWIS must remain in automatic mode, and the building must be evacuated.

Use of occupant or emergency warning systems

If you do *not* intend to use the occupant warning system to manage an evacuation, you must ensure the alert signal is set to “0 seconds”, causing the system to transition directly to evacuation mode when a fire alarm activates.

Legal requirements and prohibited actions

Under *Fire Service Act 1979*, Section 128 – Offences and Penalties, it is an offence to tamper with or interfere with a fire alarm or fire signalling device.

This includes:

- Isolating or switching a EWIS to manual mode after activation when any of the above parameters exist in *‘When the EWIS Must Remain in Automatic or Evacuation Mode’*.
- Opening the FDCIE/FIP door and touching or adjusting controls.
- Interfering with alarm signals, silencing or attempting to silence the occupant warning system.
- Leaving keys in the FDCIE/FIP—keys must be secured in an approved location away from the FDCIE/FIP.

2.5 Evacuation routes and exits

Provide clear information on the evacuation routes, exits, and assembly areas that will be used during an emergency. Your Fire Evacuation Plan must address the following:

2.5.1 Assessment of evacuation routes and exits

- Identify the likely effects of a fire emergency on potential fire evacuation routes and exits.
    - For example, a fire impacting an exit stairwell may render it unsafe, requiring an alternative egress path.
- Outline how these risks were assessed and how alternative routes were selected where necessary.

2.5.2 Selected evacuation routes

- Specify the fire evacuation route(s) chosen for the building.
- Wherever possible, occupants should evacuate via the nearest safe exit.
- Provide alternative paths of travel for use if the primary route becomes unsafe.

2.5.3 Assembly process

Your plan must nominate the assembly process to be used during a fire evacuation:

Assembly area method

This method involves all evacuees gathering at a designated location.
When selecting an assembly area, consider:

- The number of people who may need to assemble.

- Whether the area provides sufficient space for all occupants.
- An alternative assembly area, in case the primary location is unsafe or inaccessible.

Dispersal method
A dispersal fire evacuation directs evacuees to multiple separate locations rather than one central area.

This method can reduce congestion and improve safety in large or complex facilities.

Both approaches have advantages and limitations. Understanding these is essential for selecting the most appropriate method for your building and occupancy type.

2.5.4 Accessibility requirements

- Fire evacuation routes, exits, and assembly areas must be accessible to people with evacuation impairments and/or assistance needs.
- If refuges, assisted evacuation points, or alternative accessible routes are used, these must be clearly detailed in the Fire Evacuation Plan.

2.5.5 Exit hardware

- Fire door bolts or similar devices must not be used on required exits in any building in Tasmania unless specifically approved through a formal building regulatory design and approval process..
- Only lawful, compliant locking devices approved by a building surveyor may be installed.

2.5.6 Use of lifts and escalators

- When a fire alarm activates or a fire is detected, lifts must not be relied upon for fire evacuation. Occupants must use fire escape stairs.
- Lifts and escalators may only be included in the fire evacuation strategy if specifically approved through a formal building regulatory design and approval process.
- Lifts should be locked out at a designated level and shut down to prevent use during a fire emergency.
- Fire evacuation of mobility-impaired persons via lift or escalator must only occur under the direct supervision of firefighters.

2.5.7 Further information on fire evacuation routes and exits

- For guidance on selecting and assessing fire evacuation routes and assembly areas, refer to AS 3745, Section 4.2.6.5: Assembly Areas.
- For requirements relating to the use of lifts and escalators during a fire evacuation, refer to AS 3745, Section 4.2.9: Lifts and Escalators.

2.6 Fire evacuation options

You must provide details of any proposed alternative to a total fire evacuation of the building during a fire emergency. This may include procedures for lateral or vertical fire evacuation and the circumstances in which these methods will be used.

2.6.1 Use of partial or staged evacuation

In certain facilities—such as hospitals, aged care facilities, prisons, remand centres, and multi-storey buildings — a lateral fire evacuation into an adjoining fire compartment may be used instead of a full fire evacuation.

If your plan proposes any alternative to a total fire evacuation, you must provide evidence that:

- Fire and/or smoke separation (compartments) are installed as designed, approved, and compliant with the *National Construction Code*.
- Compartments are suitable for use in a staged fire evacuation strategy and can safely accommodate the intended number of occupants.

2.6.2 Important note on smoke compartments

Smoke compartments must not be used as assembly areas during a lateral fire evacuation.

- Occupants may only be temporarily staged in a smoke compartment.
- Fire evacuation should be systematic, beginning with the room of fire origin and progressing to adjacent areas.
- Movement into smoke compartments is acceptable initially *only where appropriate provisions exist* for occupants with evacuation impairments.

2.6.3 Identification of fire compartments

- Fire compartments must be clearly identified on evacuation diagrams included in the fire evacuation plan.
- Compartments must display the lowest relevant fire-resistance rating, e.g. *120/120/120*.
- For clarification on fire-compartment ratings, consult the building services department, building surveyor, or building fire engineer for the building.

2.6.4 Staged evacuation in multi-storey buildings

For multi-storey buildings, a staged approach may be considered, such as evacuating:

1. The fire floor,
2. The two floors above, followed by
3. The remaining levels, as required.

Where this sequence cannot be applied, the fire floor must be evacuated first, followed by a controlled, staged fire evacuation to prevent fire stairs from becoming congested.

2.6.5 Communication systems

An appropriate communication system must be available to direct and manage occupants during partial or staged fire evacuation.

Examples include:

- An Emergency Warning and Intercommunication System (EWIS),

- A public address (PA) system.

2.6.6 Training requirements

Every Warden involved in implementing a staged or partial fire evacuation must:

- Receive specific training relevant to the procedure,
- Be competent in their allocated roles, and
- Be able to recognise when a full fire evacuation is required.

2.7 Accessibility of the fire evacuation plan

The fire evacuation plan must be readily available to all building occupants and emergency personnel.

Copies should be:

- Displayed in key locations, such as entrances, staff rooms, and noticeboards.
- Provided to all new staff, tenants, or residents upon induction.
- Kept in an accessible format, both in hard copy and electronically where practical.
- Be made available to people with evacuation impairments and mobility challenges.

Language and terminology should be clear, avoiding unnecessary technical jargon, so that all occupants can easily understand the procedures.

2.8 Evacuation diagrams

Evacuation diagrams are an essential component of the fire evacuation plan. They provide visual information that helps occupants understand escape routes, equipment locations, and assembly areas during an emergency.

Further information on evacuation diagrams can be found in AS 3745, section 3.5.

2.8.1 Purpose

Evacuation diagrams are designed to:

- Guide occupants to the nearest safe exit.
- Identify key emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers, hose reels, and alarm points.
- Reinforce awareness of fire evacuation procedures and assembly locations.
- Supports people unfamiliar with the building to orient themselves during an emergency.

2.8.2 Placement and visibility

Evacuation diagrams must be prominently displayed in appropriate locations throughout the building. Placement should ensure that all occupants have ready access to at least one diagram from any point within the facility.

Diagrams should be:

- Located near main entrances, exits, lift lobbies, and corridors.
- Clearly visible, unobstructed, and illuminated where necessary.

In large or complex buildings, additional diagrams should be installed to ensure adequate coverage and clarity for all occupants.

Hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, short-stay “Airbnb-style” accommodation, and similar buildings must display an emergency action guide and evacuation diagram on the inside of each accommodation entry door. This ensures guests have immediate access to information on how to alert others and the fire service to smoke or fire, the steps to follow during a fire evacuation, and the location of the emergency assembly area, including the safest exit routes to reach it.

2.8.3 Content and format

Each evacuation diagram must include the elements identified in AS 3745, section 3.5.5 and where appropriate elements within section 3.5.6.

The diagrams should be drawn to scale where practical and must use standardised symbols consistent with AS 3745.

Only information identified in AS 3745 will be included in the diagram, no other information must congest the fire evacuation information.

2.8.4 Maintenance and review

Evacuation diagrams must be reviewed at least every five years, or sooner if:

- Building layouts or exits change,
- Fire safety equipment is relocated, or
- Assembly areas or contact information are updated.

All diagrams must display a date of validity and the name of the person or company responsible for their preparation.

Outdated or damaged diagrams must be replaced immediately to ensure accuracy and access to information.

2.9 Further information on preparing a fire evacuation plan

For further information on preparing a fire evacuation plan, please refer to the ‘fire evacuation plan checklist’ available on the TFS website and/or AS 3745 and where applicable AS 4083.

3. Procedures for persons requiring assistance to evacuate

The fire evacuation plan must consider the needs of all occupants, including those who may require additional support during an emergency. This includes individuals with mobility limitations, sensory impairments, medical conditions, or temporary injuries.

3.1 Identifying persons requiring assistance

Building owners and responsible persons should:

- Encourage occupants to voluntarily identify any assistance needs.
- Maintain a confidential register of individuals requiring support.
- Periodically review the register to ensure it remains accurate.

Disclosure of assistance needs is voluntary, and information should be handled respectfully and in accordance with privacy requirements.

Include people requiring assistance in practice evacuations to test procedures.

3.2 Personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs)

A PEEP should be prepared for individuals who cannot evacuate independently. A PEEP must:

- Be tailored to the individual's abilities, needs, and location(s) in the building.
- Identify the type of assistance required, such as a support person, evacuation chair, or guidance during a fire evacuation.
- Specify the roles of staff or wardens responsible for providing support.
- Be shared with relevant ECO members and reviewed regularly.
- PEEPs must integrate and be consistent with the fire evacuation plan.

3.3 Assistance during a fire evacuation

During a fire evacuation, ECO members and designated support personnel should:

- Provide assistance in accordance with the individual's PEEP.
- Ensure safe movement along fire evacuation routes.
- Avoid using lifts unless approved for emergency use.
- Communicate clearly and calmly to maintain reassurance.

If necessary, refuge areas or safe holding points may be used as part of a staged fire evacuation strategy, following guidance from fire authorities.

3.4 Equipment and resources

Where specialised equipment is required, the responsible person must ensure:

- Availability of evacuation chairs, communication aids, or other mobility devices.
- Regular maintenance and readiness of equipment.
- Adequate training for staff in safe and correct use.

Equipment should be appropriately located and accessible without hindering general egress.

3.5 Review and improvement

Procedures for assisting persons requiring support should be reviewed:

- After drills involving supported fire evacuations,
- When an individual's needs change,
- When building modifications affect movement or accessible egress, or
- Following any incident or near miss.

Continuous improvement ensures that fire evacuation processes remain safe, effective, and inclusive.

3.6 Vulnerable persons in residential settings

For further information on managing vulnerable persons in residential buildings, refer to Guideline 0.3.5 *Vulnerable Occupants in Residential Buildings*, available on the TFS website at www.fire.tas.gov.au.

4. Post-evacuation actions

Post-fire evacuation actions ensure that all occupants are accounted for, hazards are identified, and the building is safe before re-entry. They provide an opportunity to learn from each incident or drill and improve future responses.

4.1 Assembly area procedures

Once occupants have reached the assembly area, the ECO and wardens must:

- Conduct roll calls or headcounts where practical.
- Confirm that all areas under their responsibility have been checked and cleared.
- Report the status of their area to the Chief Warden, including any missing persons or concerns.
- Ensure occupants remain in the assembly area until advised otherwise.

Clear communication at the assembly area is essential to maintain safety and organisation.

4.2 Communication with emergency services

The Chief Warden or responsible person must meet fire service personnel arriving to provide key information, including:

- Location and nature of the fire or alarm activation.
- Areas searched and any areas not yet confirmed as clear.
- Details of missing persons or individuals requiring assistance.
- Building features relevant to firefighting, such as fire control rooms, hydrants, or hazards.

Emergency services take control of the situation upon arrival. The ECO provides support and information as required.

4.3 Re-entry to the building

Occupants must not re-enter the building until emergency services has declared it safe. Re-entry should only occur when:

- The incident has been fully resolved and the all-clear is provided by the attending fire officer.
- Alarm and fire safety systems are reset or restored by the attending fire officer.
- Hazards have been controlled or isolated.
- The ECO is ready to assist with orderly re-entry if needed.

Clear instructions must be communicated to all occupants before re-entering the building.

Important note: In limited circumstances, staff that work in the health, aged care and disability care sectors may be able to re-enter for the purpose of assisting others out of the building, only if safe to do so. These staff must be trained to undertake a dynamic risk assessment of the fire safety risks prior to re-entering a building.

4.4 Incident reporting

Following any fire evacuation—real or simulated—an incident report should be completed. The report should include:

- Time, date, and type of fire evacuation.
- Cause of alarm activation, if known.
- Issues encountered during the fire evacuation.
- Actions taken by the ECO and emergency services.
- Recommendations for improvements.

Documenting incidents supports compliance and provides critical insights for improving future responses.

5. Practice evacuation drills and training

Regular practice evacuation drills and training are essential to ensure that occupants, staff, and the ECO understand their roles and can respond effectively during a fire or emergency. Practicing fire evacuation procedures builds confidence, reduces confusion, and supports safe and orderly fire evacuation.

5.1 Frequency of drills

Practice evacuation drills must be conducted:

- At least once every 12 months (refer to the requirements of an annual practice evacuation in section 8.1 of this guideline), or
- More frequently if required by legislation, risk assessments, or organisational policy.

Additional drills may be necessary:

- Following significant building modifications,
- When new staff are employed in large numbers,
- If deficiencies were identified during a previous drill, or
- In high-risk facilities such as accommodation, hospitals or aged care centres.

5.2 Conducting drills

Practice evacuation drills must simulate realistic emergency conditions while ensuring the safety of all participants and be consistent with the approved fire evacuation plan. Drills should:

- Include activation of alarms or notification systems.
- Require occupants to follow designated fire evacuation routes to assembly areas.
- Test ECO coordination, communication, and clearance procedures.
- Evaluate the performance of wardens and support personnel.
- Identify delays, obstructions, or behavioural issues that may impact safety.

Complex facilities may conduct staged drills or scenario-based exercises to align with operational needs.

5.3 Training requirements

All staff and ECO members must receive appropriate training to understand their responsibilities during an emergency. Training should include:

- Familiarisation with the fire evacuation plan and diagrams.
- Correct use of fire evacuation routes, exits, and assembly areas.

- Procedures for assisting persons requiring help.
- Use of communication systems and equipment.
- Duties of wardens, including area sweeps and reporting.

ECO members are required to attend skills retention activities at intervals no greater than 6 months.

5.4 Documentation of drills and training

Records of all practice evacuation drills and training sessions must be maintained. Documentation should include:

- Date, time, and type of drill or training.
- Names of participants and instructors.
- Observations, issues identified, and recommendations for improvement.
- Timings for the practice evacuation and assembly.

These records should be kept for auditing, compliance, and continuous improvement purposes.

6. Evacuation planning for special use buildings and events

6.1 Theatres, Cinemas and buildings used for performances, training, or assessment activities

Theatres, Cinemas and other buildings where performances occur in the building and where training or assessment sessions, such as university exams occur must comply with the following requirements:

- Fire detection and suppression systems must always remain active.
- Systems must not be isolated, silenced, or disabled to avoid disruption.

6.2 Special Fire Hazard Premises

Buildings classified as a special fire hazard are considered *specified buildings* under the General Fire Regulations. Examples of special fire hazard premises include, but not limited to distilleries, bond stores, aircraft hangars, film and television studios, and buildings with high-pile or high-stack storage.

For further information on special fire hazard premises, refer to the Director of Building Control's Special Fire Hazard Determination available at: www.cbos.tas.gov.au

6.3 Multi-tenancy buildings

Multi-tenancy buildings must operate under a single, coordinated fire evacuation plan. The fire evacuation plan must clearly define roles and responsibilities across all tenancies to ensure a unified, efficient, and safe emergency response.

The following structure is recommended:

- A Chief Warden must be appointed for the entire building, and this position must be filled at all times.
- An Area Warden should be appointed for each tenancy or designated area within the building.
- Floor Wardens should be appointed where the building is organised by stories rather than by tenancy or functional areas.
- Deputy Area or Floor Wardens should be nominated to ensure adequate coverage during staff absences.
- Each Area or Floor Warden must report the fire evacuation status of their area or floor directly to the Chief Warden.
- Where multiple tenancies share the same Fire Detection Control and Indicating Equipment (FDCIE) or Fire Indicator Panel (FIP) or EWIS, the fire evacuation plan must coordinate all occupants under a single ECO.

- All tenants must be informed of the fire evacuation plan and any designated ECO roles. Key tenant representatives should participate in developing the plan and must be involved in training and practice evacuation drills.

6.4 Special or one-off events

If you are organising a special or one-off event—such as markets, fairs, festivals, or similar activities — you should have a fire evacuation plan reviewed by the TFS for that event.

Plans can be submitted via email to **tfs@fire.tas.gov.au**. These plans assist firefighters by providing essential information about the event location and the fire evacuation procedures that will be used.

You are also responsible for ensuring that all required permits and licenses have been obtained from local government and any relevant regulatory authorities. For these types of events, it is recommended that you consult a building surveyor to understand the fire safety requirements applicable to your event.

If your special or one-off event is held inside a specified building, you must comply with the existing TFS-approved fire evacuation plan for that building. However, if your event exceeds the approved occupant capacity of the specified building, you must submit an event-specific fire evacuation plan for approval.

When submitting a Fire Evacuation Plan for a special or one-off event, you must allow a minimum of 20 working days for the TFS to assess and process the plan.

6.5 False fire alarms in buildings

TFS has a dedicated unit that manages problematic false alarms in buildings and provides support and advice to building owners and occupiers to prevent false fire alarms. More information on false fire alarms is available at: **www.fire.tas.gov.au**

7. Approval process for the fire evacuation plan

A fire evacuation plan addresses procedures for fire-related emergencies. Additional procedures may be required for other types of emergencies.

A fire evacuation plan outlines how the building will be evacuated in the event of a fire.

7.1 Assistance with developing a fire evacuation plan

You may prepare the fire evacuation plan yourself however, the TFS recommends engaging a Fire Evacuation Planning Consultant to ensure the plan is developed in accordance with the relevant Australian Standards. The TFS must remain impartial and therefore cannot recommend individual consultants.

TFS Building Safety Officers and Planners can provide advice and practical assistance with the preparation of the fire evacuation plan however will not be involved in the development of a fire evacuation plan.

7.2 Interim fire evacuation plan

Interim fire evacuation plans may be approved for multi-tenancy buildings that are nearing completion. This allows one or two tenants to occupy the building before construction is fully finished. Interim plans must identify a Chief Warden and outline how additional tenancies will be incorporated as they become occupied, including the appointment of wardens appropriate to each tenancy's occupancy profile.

Once construction is complete and the building is fully occupied, a final fire evacuation plan must be submitted to the TFS for approval.

7.3 Approval of fire evacuation plans prior to a building's occupancy

Before a specified building can be issued an Occupancy Permit, a fire evacuation plan must be prepared and receive in-principle approval from the TFS Chief Officer. A minimum of 20 working days is required for the TFS to assess and process the plan related to a building's occupancy.

Following the granting of in-principle approval, the fire evacuation plan must obtain final approval within 60 days.

7.4 Exempting persons from taking part in a practice evacuation

A person may be exempt from participating in a practice evacuation if the observing officer is reasonably satisfied that the associated stoppage or interruption of activities would:

- result in significant commercial loss; or
- endanger life or property.

Prior to the practice evacuation, the observing officer must be consulted regarding any proposed exemption and the circumstances necessitating it.

A standing exemption may be requested by submitting a written application to the Chief Officer outlining the reasons for the exemption. The Chief Officer may grant the exemption in writing if they are reasonably satisfied that the associated stoppage or interruption of activities would:

- result in significant commercial loss; or
- endanger life or property.

7.5 TFS fire evacuation processes

To obtain approval for your fire evacuation plan, the following steps must be completed:

7.5.1 Submission of the fire evacuation plan

Once the fire evacuation plan has been prepared, submit it to the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) for review by the Chief Officer. Plans may be emailed to the relevant regional Building Safety Office:

- **Southern Region:** buildingsafetysouth@fire.tas.gov.au
  - **Phone –** 6166 5615
- **Northern Region:** buildingsafetynorth@fire.tas.gov.au
  - **Phone -** 6777 3662
- **Northwest Region:** buildingsafetynorthwest@fire.tas.gov.au
  - **Phone -** 6477 7250

If you are unsure which region applies to your building, submit the plan to tfs@fire.tas.gov.au, and it will be forwarded to the appropriate area.

7.5.2 Initial review

If the submitted plan does not meet the intent of this guideline or the requirements of AS 3745 and/or AS 4083, you will be notified in writing and requested to make amendments or provide further information.

7.5.3 In-principle approval

If the plan satisfies the required standards through the TFS review process, it will be granted in-principle approval. The in-principle approved fire evacuation plan will be stamped with a watermark on each page confirming the plan is approved by TFS. Notification of in-principle approval will be provided in writing.

7.5.4 Practice evacuation

Following in-principle approval, you must conduct a practice evacuation within 60 days, observed by a TFS Officer. This exercise verifies the effectiveness of the written plan.

7.5.5 Scheduling the practice evacuation

It is the responsibility of the building occupier or responsible person to contact the TFS and arrange the observed practice evacuation. The TFS strongly recommends conducting at least one informal practice beforehand.

To schedule a practice, please contact the relevant regional administration office:

- **Southern Region:** southern.region@fire.tas.gov.au
    - **Phone –** 6166 5500
- **Northern Region:** northern.region@fire.tas.gov.au
    - **Phone –** 6777 3662
- **Northwest Region:** northwest.region@fire.tas.gov.au
    - **Phone –** 6477 7250

7.5.6 Final approval

If the TFS observed practice evacuation is successful, you will receive written confirmation of final approval for the fire evacuation plan.

7.5.7 Reassessment

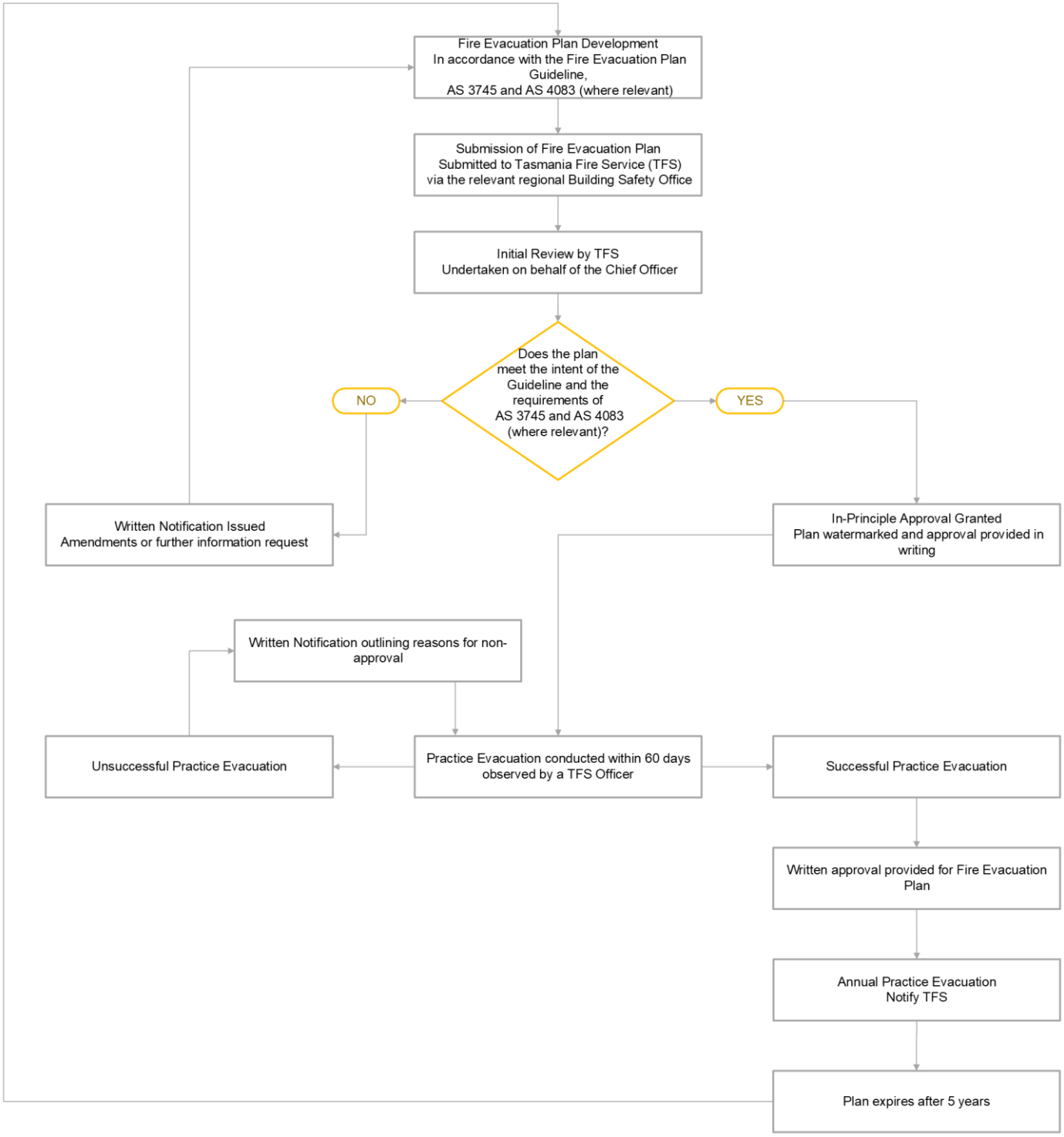
If the practice evacuation is unsuccessful, you will receive written feedback outlining the issues identified, along with a timeframe to address them and arrange a reassessment.

7.5.8 Access to the fire evacuation plan

A copy of the approved fire evacuation plan must be kept at the building's emergency control point and be readily accessible to any building occupant who requests it.

For further guidance on emergency response exercises, refer to Section 7: Emergency response exercises of AS 3745.

7.5.9 Flow chart - fire evacuation approval process



8. Plan review and continuous improvement

Effective fire safety management requires ongoing review and improvement of the fire evacuation plan. Regular evaluation ensures the plan remains current, practical, and aligned with building conditions, occupant needs, and legislative requirements.

8.1 Annual practice evacuations

It is a requirement under the General Fire Regulations that all specified buildings with an approved fire evacuation plan must carry out a practice evacuation once every 12 months.

When planning the practice evacuation drill you must ensure that:

- The TFS is provided with at least 5 days advanced notice of the practice evacuation; and
- The practice evacuation is carried out in accordance with the fire evacuation plan.

8.2 Expiry of the fire evacuation plan

Under the General Fire Regulations an approved fire evacuation plan expires after it has been in effect for 5 years. The fire evacuation plan must be resubmitted to TFS for approval.

Use the information in section 8 – ‘Plan review and continuous improvement’ of this guideline to assist you to review your fire evacuation plan.

Follow the information in section 7 – ‘Approval process for the fire evacuation plan’ of this guideline to assist you to submit your fire evacuation plan for approval.

8.3 Evaluation of practice evacuations and incidents

Each practice evacuation or emergency event should be evaluated to assess:

- Suitability of the approved fire evacuation plan.
- Response times and fire evacuation flow.
- Clarity and effectiveness of communication systems.
- Performance of ECO members.
- Behaviour and cooperation of occupants.
- Any obstacles, delays, or equipment issues.

Feedback should be gathered from wardens, staff, and, where appropriate, occupants to identify opportunities for improvement.

8.4 Regular review

The fire evacuation plan must be reviewed:

- At least annually,
- After any building modification or change in occupancy,
- Following an actual emergency, or
- When a drill identifies deficiencies in the plan or procedures.

Reviews should ensure that:

- Contact details and roles remain current.
- Fire safety equipment and fire evacuation routes are correctly documented.
- Any new risks or hazards are identified and addressed.

All revisions must be dated, approved by the responsible person and submitted to TFS for final review and approval. Once approved, the new revision of the plan must be communicated to all occupants and staff.

8.5 Continuous improvement measures

To support continuous improvement, building owners and responsible persons should:

- Update procedures and diagrams in response to identified issues.
- Provide additional training or targeted refresher sessions if performance gaps are noted.
- Review and enhance equipment and resources where required.
- Strengthen communication and engagement with occupants to build awareness and preparedness.

Improvement actions should be tracked and incorporated into future training and reviews.

8.6 Documentation and records

Records of the fire evacuation plan, including training sessions, drills, maintenance, and updates, should be securely retained. Documentation must be available for inspection by fire authorities or regulators upon request.

Records should include:

- Dates of plan preparation and revision.
- Details of practice evacuations and outcomes.
- Attendance lists for training sessions.
- Maintenance logs for fire safety systems.

- Review checklists and approval notes.
- Updated versions of the fire evacuation plan.
- Maintenance reports for fire safety systems.
- Corrective actions and outcomes.

Accurate record keeping supports both building occupant and firefighter safety, compliance and continuous improvement in fire safety.

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