



Commentary

Title: Emergency Planning (As pertains to section 2.8 of the National Fire Code)

Issued: December 2004

Scope: Emergency planning is an essential part of ensuring fire and life safety. A growing number of Saskatchewan fire departments are receiving requests for help in developing and implementing emergency plans. This document is intended to aid local fire authorities as they help facility operators develop or update fire safety plans. Although emergency plans are a good idea for every building and facility, the National Fire Code¹ (NFC) requires plans only in a select number of locations.

1. Emergency plans should detail measures for fire prevention and the procedures to be followed in emergencies. The structures and locations listed here must have a written fire emergency plan acceptable to the *authority having jurisdiction*.²
 - Buildings containing a care, assembly or detention occupancy
 - Structures required to have a fire alarm system
 - Sites undergoing construction or demolition³
 - Locations with a storage area for dangerous goods
 - Anywhere flammable or combustible liquids are stored or handled
 - Facilities or locations where hazardous processes or operations occur
 - Outdoor storage areas greater than 100 square meters in size
2. The NFC is very clear, emergency plans shall be prepared **in cooperation with the fire department** and other regulatory authorities as applicable. Plans must include provisions for the following.
 - a) The emergency procedures to be used in case of fire, including:
 - i) sounding the fire alarm,
 - ii) notifying the fire department,
 - iii) instructing occupants about the procedures to be followed when the fire alarm sounds,
 - iv) evacuating occupants, including special provisions for persons requiring assistance and
 - v) confining, controlling and extinguishing the fire.
 - b) The appointment and organization of designated supervisory staff to carry out fire safety duties.

¹ The National Fire Code has been adopted as the primary set of fire code regulations and has the force of legislation in Saskatchewan.

² *Authority having jurisdiction* means the municipal authority responsible for enforcement of fire safety regulations and/or fire suppression response.

³ Demolition and construction sites require emergency plans where the authority having jurisdiction determines such plans are necessary.

- c) The training of supervisory staff and other occupants in their responsibilities for fire safety.
 - d) Documents, including diagrams, showing the type, location and operation of the building fire emergency systems.
 - e) Procedures for conducting fire drills.
 - f) Measures for controlling fire hazards at the site.
 - g) How inspection and maintenance of the facility will be provided for the safety of occupants.
3. Where an emergency plan covers the indoor storage of dangerous goods (see NFC 3.2)⁴, the plan must also contain the following information.
- a) The product classification of stored materials, for each part of the building where products of different classifications are stored.
 - b) The method of storage, including aisle width for rack storage.
 - c) The maximum permitted height of storage for each product or area of building.
 - d) The maximum permitted size of individual storage areas.
 - e) In sprinklered buildings this additional information will be provided:
 - i.) the sprinkler design criteria,
 - ii.) inside and outside hose allowances and
 - iii.) results of the benchmark sprinkler main drain and water flow tests.
4. Where the emergency plan covers outdoor storage of dangerous goods and other products (see NFC 3.3)⁵, the plan must also contain the following information.
- a) The location and classification of the products stored.
 - b) The method of storage including height and maximum size of storage areas.
 - c) The location of fire alarms and fire fighting equipment.
 - d) Details of fire hazards and controls in and around the storage area(s).
5. Where an emergency plan contains provisions for the use of fire fighting equipment, fire fighting should be considered only under the following circumstances.
- a) All occupants have been evacuated or are located in a safe area.
 - b) The fire department has been called and is responding.
 - c) The person or persons assigned to fire fighting are trained in the use of the equipment.
 - d) The fire is small, confined and not growing rapidly.
 - e) The correct fire extinguisher or equipment is readily available.
 - f) Those persons fighting the fire are not exposed to heat, flame, smoke or toxic gases.
 - g) The fire can be fought so there is always a clear exit/escape route that will not be blocked by heat, flame or smoke.
 - h) The persons involved are confident in using the equipment and in putting out the fire.

⁴ Section 3.2. – Indoor Storage, *National Fire Code of Canada, 1995*, National Research Council of Canada.

⁵ Section 3.3. – Outdoor Storage, *National Fire Code of Canada, 1995*, National Research Council of Canada.

6. The emergency plan should be explained to all new staff when they start employment and be posted in prominent locations at the site. In outdoor storage areas the plan must be posted within the outdoor storage area. When the plan is updated or revised all employees must be notified.
7. Fire drills must be conducted, at a minimum, on the following schedules.
 - a) In day care facilities, not more than 1 month apart for supervisory staff appointed under the emergency plan.⁶
 - b) In schools attended by children, total evacuation drills must be held at least 3 times in each fall and 3 times in each spring school terms.
 - c) In high buildings, at intervals not greater than 2 months for supervisory staff appointed under the emergency plan.
 - d) In all other buildings, drills must be held based upon consideration of the following:
 - i.) the nature of the building occupancy and fire hazards,
 - ii.) the safety features provided in the design and construction of the building,
 - iii.) the desired/expected degree of participation from occupants other than supervisory staff appointed under the emergency plan,
 - iv.) the number of supervisory staff available and their degree of familiarity and experience with the plan,
 - v.) the features of emergency systems installed in the building, and
 - vi.) the requirements of the fire department and/or local authority having jurisdiction.

Conclusion

The requirements in the National Fire Code are considered as a minimum for emergency planning. Plans that go further, to detail preventive measures and emergency actions beyond those specified in the NFC, are perfectly acceptable. So are plans for buildings, facilities and sites where the NFC requires no plan be developed. Working with all building and facility operators in a community will help departments to better understand the fire and life safety risks they face. The NFC and this guide will help in developing all emergency plans, those that are required by Code, as well as those that are not.

⁶ In emergency planning for day care facilities - particularly those facilities serving very young children or persons living with physical or mental challenges - careful consideration must be made of the number of staff persons required to complete a safe and effective evacuation of all occupants. Often, existing fire safety plans and staffing levels do not provide adequately for a safe and timely evacuation. Fire authorities are urged to pay special attention to this aspect of emergency planning for day care facilities.