

According to the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), in 2023 there were 1,389,000 fires reported in the United States. Read below for tips on how to prevent incidents.



Common Fire Hazards

- Electrical hazards such as wiring, appliances, outlets, equipment, and extension cords
- Storage and handling of flammable and combustible materials
- Open flames and smoking materials
- Heat generating appliances such as space heaters
- Cooking equipment



Prevention is Key

Minimize danger to employees and the individuals you support by following these prevention tips:

- Exit routes should be free of obstruction
- Exit routes must be arranged so employees do not travel toward a high hazard area
- Exits should be in proper working order at all times
- Exits must be well lit
- Each exit should have access to the outside that is large enough to accommodate all building occupants
- Exit stairs that continue beyond the level on which the exit is located must be interrupted on that level by doors, partitions, or other effective means that clearly indicate the direction of travel to the exit
- Doors must be able to open from the inside at all times without keys, tools, or special knowledge
- Doors must be free of any device or alarm that could restrict emergency use if the device or alarm fails



Availability of Fire Extinguishers

Because a fire can spread rapidly, the number one priority is to get out safely. However, if used properly, fire extinguishers can save lives. Where portable fire extinguishers are provided, employees must be trained on the general principles of fire extinguisher use. Extinguishers should be mounted, located, and identified so workers can access them without being subject to injury. Additionally, fire extinguishers should be checked annually to ensure they are in proper working order.



Sprinkler System

- Sprinkler system water control valves, air, and water pressure should be checked periodically
- Maintenance of these systems should be done by qualified personnel - Certificates of Insurance should be obtained from any 3rd party conducting work on your system
- Sprinkler heads should be protected with metal guards to prevent damage
- It is recommended that sprinkler heads have 18" of clearance
- According to the NFPA, having a sprinkler system installed and working properly decreases property damage caused by fire by 68%



Smoking

- Smoking should not be allowed inside any program or office site
- It is recommended that smoking areas be at least 50 feet away from the building
- It is recommended to have smoking remnant receptacles and a schedule as to how often they are emptied

FIRE PREVENTION PRACTICES



Attic, Crawl Space, and Roofed Porch Heat Detectors

Use of smoke detectors in spaces that are subject to very cold temperatures, such as unheated attics, crawl spaces, and roofed porches is not recommended. It is recommended to equip such areas with rate-of-rise or fixed self-restorative heat detectors that are hard wired, powered by the building electrical service, and are interconnected to the building's fire alarm and smoke detectors.



Evacuation Drills

Every effort should be made to provide both staff and the individuals you support with the opportunity to practice an evacuation plan. The following is a guideline for implementation of a fire drill policy. Your organization should abide by your state regulations pertaining to the frequency with which evacuation drills should be practiced.

Frequency of Fire Drills

- In a 24 hour staffed residential setting: one fire drill per shift, per quarter
- In a non-24 hour staffed residential setting: four evacuation drills per year with two during the overnight
- In a day program: one evacuation drill per quarter

Consider implementing unannounced observations of evacuation drills by administrative staff. This would be an effective way to ensure that staffing is sufficient and information documented in fire drill reports is accurate.

When conducting fire drills, evaluate the needs of the people you support. Each individual should have a service plan specific to how he/she may react to an evacuation. Methods should be developed to ensure that each person has the support needed to evacuate safely. All staff should be trained on these service plans, and the plans should be reviewed on a regular basis. It is also important that the local fire authority is aware of any circumstances that may impede an individual's safety.

Unsuccessful Evacuations

When an evacuation is unsuccessful, take proactive steps to address the issue(s). Determine the cause and take whatever steps are needed to resolve the problem. If there is a pattern of failure to complete drills, take timely, systemic action.



Contact with Local Fire Authority

The local fire authority should be informed regarding the type of program you provide in the area of their responsibility. Information should include:

- Individuals served
- Any needs of the individuals that would have an impact on evacuation
- Fire safety features and staffing pattern of the program
- Contact the fire authority each time there is a significant change in the program such as admission of a new participant, or if the program undergoes significant renovations

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more information

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