



CITY OF HOUSTON

Fire Department

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Subject: **Conducting Fire Drills in High-rise Buildings**

To Whom it may concern:

In accordance with the *City of Houston Fire Code*, Chapter 4, fire drills in high-rise buildings are to be conducted at least every 6 months.

The fire drill is for the management staff and building occupants.

The main purpose of a total building fire drill is to allow the people in the building to hear what the fire alarm tone sounds like, hear the public address system (where provided), and to learn where the exits/stairs are located.

Another purpose is to see if the management personnel can put the entire building in alarm from the fire alarm control panel, operate the public address system and properly recall the elevators using the elevator fire service recall keys (Phase I).

1. Building management must provide advance written notification to all management employees who are on staff and/or contracted and the building's tenants, guests and/or residences of the date, the exact time, duration and particulars of the fire drill. When the alarm is activated for the scheduled fire drill, the fire department should not be called.
2. Tenants must give the fire drill information to all employees, and to all contractors and visitors on the date/time of a scheduled fire drill.
3. Instruction in the notice must state that during the fire drill, all personal must go to the stairs and standby outside the stairway, and **Not to Go into the Stairs**.
4. Persons who may be mobility impaired may be excused from the drill with written notification to building management.
5. During the drill if anyone cannot hear the alarm or understand the public address announcement (where provided), they should notify the building management in writing as soon as possible.

6. At least 15 minutes before the exact time of the fire drill the UL Listed monitoring service and/or telephone answering service (if no monitoring service) should be called and the fire drill information given to the call taker. They must be told that when the alarm comes in for the fire drill that they are not to call the fire department.

Note: If the monitoring service, answering service or anyone from the building calls the fire department when the fire alarm sounds for the drill, the fire department will send a Fire Truck in the emergency mode. This is considered a false alarm.

When the drill is over the alarm monitoring service and/or answering service should be called back as soon as possible to put the building back on line.

7. Send a fax to the building's UL Listed Monitoring Service, Telephone Answering Service and the Houston Fire Department's Office of Emergency Communications (713-884-4237) at least 2 hours before the fire drill to inform them of the fire drill particulars. Then again just prior to the fire drill, notify the Houston Fire Department Office of Emergency Communications by calling **713-884-3143**, to inform them of the fire drill, and to provide them with the building's name, street address, call-back telephone number and contact person's name, and the time drill is to start. The Fire Department Emergency Communication officer should be asked what the time is at his office and the fire drill should be conducted using the fire dispatch time. You should also again contact the Fire Department Office of Emergency Communication when the fire drill has concluded.

8. The fire alarm technician and the elevator technician should be present for the drill to assist management personnel and monitor their equipment.

9. All building elevators should be called down in the Emergency Fire Service Recall mode (Phase I) one minute before the drill. Management should ride the elevators during the drill to spot check floors and check the operation of the elevators in Elevator Fire Service mode (Phase II). The elevator technician should verify elevators are functioning properly in all fire service modes.

10. **Everyone** must participate in the drill (mobility impaired persons may be excused if they have notified building management in writing prior to the drill). Management should conduct drills at a convenient time for tenants if possible (ex: After stock market closes, before doctors' offices become full of patients, etc.).

11. During the fire drill, if phones must be answered or where it is difficult for everyone to participate, the drill participation can be done in shifts. Some persons may go to the stair, then return to their offices to relieve others so that everyone can participate in the drill. **Everyone** must participate the drill.

12. Buildings without public address systems should state in their written fire drill announcement that the fire drill will start when the fire alarm has sounded and will conclude in the fire alarm stops. People can then return to their building duties.

13. Pre-recorded messages in fire alarm systems should be by-passed during fire drills. The same fire tone must be used during drills that will be sounded when the building is in an actual alarm.

The following is a sample procedure for a 100%, 5-minute drill:

Turn fire alarm tones ON in the entire building and allow to sound 5 times.

Then, Key the microphone and state message below with P.A. in the "All Call Mode"

(100% P.A.):

FIRE DRILL ANNOUNCEMENT:

"At This Time We Are Conducting A Required Fire Drill

I Repeat, **This is a Drill**

Please Proceed To The Exit Stairwells And Stand By

Do Not Go Into The Stairs"

Allow the fire alarm to sound 5 more times and then repeat the message.

Allow the fire alarm to continue to sound and repeat the message at least once every minute during the drill.

After 5 minutes, key the microphone and say:

"This Concludes Our Fire Drill

Thank You For Your Participation"

(With microphone keyed, hold to chest so other statements do not go throughout the building and reset the alarm system)

At the conclusion of the fire drill activities, management should be sure to document and keep on file the building's fire drill information: the drill's date, time, and particulars, such as any problems encountered and those corrected or needing correction, and the time that the alarm monitoring service, answering service and the Fire Department were notified that drill activity had concluded. A sample of the fire drill notification letter given to the tenants/quests/residents should also be kept on file. The building's fire drill information may be requested by the Fire Marshal during routine building inspections or fire plan updates, or as part of a fire incident follow-up.