

**HIDALGO COUNTY, TEXAS
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY MANUAL**

Procedure:	EEP.1
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Date Authorized:	11/01/2016
Supersedes:	N/A

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN

I. PURPOSE

This policy is to establish general procedures for emergency evacuation for County of Hidalgo, Texas (hereinafter "County") Employees, Offices, and Departments.

II. GENERAL GUIDELINES

a. County Employees

ALL EMPLOYEES SHALL evacuate the building upon notification by any one of the following:

- **Activation of Alarm**
- **Emergency Personnel (Law Enforcement, Fire, Emergency Management, etc.)**
- **Elected Officials/Department Heads/Supervisors**

Responses to Fire:

Employees should:

- Immediately notify "911";
- Activate alarm; and
- Evacuate the area in accordance with the marked evacuation routes

if:

- Smoke is seen or smelled;
- Fire is spotted, no matter how small; or
- Any emergency condition is observed that could cause a threat to life or property.

County Employees should not attempt to extinguish a fire unless they have received fire extinguisher training through life safety training provided by the County of Hidalgo.

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Any attempt to extinguish a fire by employees who have completed fire extinguisher training may be made only after the above stated steps have been taken, and then ONLY if (1) the fire is small, and (2) the fire may be extinguished without the risk of injury. In the event that the fire cannot be extinguished or begins to burn out of control, attempts to extinguish the fire shall cease immediately, and the building shall be evacuated according to the department emergency evacuation plan.

When in doubt, evacuate immediately!

All Employees Shall:

- know how to activate the fire alarm or designated emergency evacuation signal for their building;
- review and become familiar with evacuation routes and the Emergency Action Plan;
- have knowledge of the main and alternate evacuation routes and the designated evacuation assembly point outside the building;
- assist visitors and others in the building that may be unfamiliar with evacuation procedures and exit routes; and
- follow the directions of designated evacuation teams, fire department personnel, law enforcement officers and/or security staff.

The Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office shall assume command during evacuation for the Courthouse, Judicial Modular Buildings, and Court Annex buildings.

The Hidalgo County Constable Precinct Four Office shall assume command during evacuation for the Courthouse Annex III building.

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b. Elected Officials/Department Heads

ALL OFFICES AND DEPARTMENTS SHALL develop, maintain, and submit an Emergency Action Plan ("EAP") that must be approved by Hidalgo County Fire Marshal's Office on an annual basis. This EAP must include the following:

- **Assembly Point(s)** - The area(s) as specified within the EAP or as advised by Emergency Personnel for each County building where building occupants gather during an evacuation and await authorization to re-enter the building.
- **Drill** - The Drill is characterized by an activity that tests, develops, or maintains skills in a single emergency response procedure.
- **Evacuation Team(s)** - A team of two trained personnel (and an alternate team) as designated in the EAP that checks who may assist emergency responders in ensuring areas occupied by a department/office are evacuated in the event of an emergency.

Elected Officials/Department Heads shall:

- designate evacuation teams in their EAP;
- provide first responders with a list of names of employees and a map of office/workstation location of all employees who require physical assistance in evacuating facilities; with the list being revised annually;
- coordinate County building evacuation training and drills for their employees;
- periodically emphasize fire prevention and emergency evacuation issues to employees and the importance of compliance with the policies and procedures described in this policy to ensure the safety of occupants in County facilities; and
- consult the Hidalgo County Fire Marshal's Office in the development of their EAP, and notify the Fire Marshal's Office if any of their facilities do not have an evacuation plan.

When two or more County Offices or Departments occupy the same County building, those Offices or Departments shall work together to develop an evacuation plan and distribute that plan to staff.

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When a Department or Office occupies leased or rented space, the Department Head shall ensure that evacuation plans and the EAP for the space are developed and distributed to staff.

III. EVACUATION PROCEDURES

a. Alarm Activation

The fire warning system in conjunction with the public address system (where applicable) shall be used for all emergencies requiring evacuation. All occupants shall immediately evacuate County buildings at the sound of an alarm and go to their designated evacuation assembly points.

Designated evacuation teams shall ensure that all employees and visitors in the facility proceed to the most direct exit route.

ALL alarms are to be considered an actual emergency and employees should immediately implement their department emergency evacuation plan, unless prior notification is given.

ALL County Employees shall notify the Fire Department of any fire, explosion, or other emergency by dialing 911.

Members of the evacuation team will check every room for occupants and lead them to the nearest stairway exit in the event of an emergency evacuation. Upon completing the sweep, the evacuation teams will notify emergency responders of the area they swept.

Employees or other non-emergency personnel shall not re-enter an evacuated building unless specifically authorized by emergency responders.

b. Building Evacuation Procedures

When an alarm sounds, all Employees shall **immediately** evacuate the building and escort visitors in a calm and orderly manner via the most direct exit to the nearest evacuation assembly point outside the building.

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When evacuating County buildings in an emergency, **the elevators shall not be used.** Persons on the elevators when the alarm sounds shall proceed directly to the ground floor via the elevator and exit the building.

c. Emergency Evacuation of Persons with Disabilities

Elected Official/Department Heads shall maintain an updated list of all employees with disabilities who cannot use stairways unaided. Employees with temporary physical conditions such as limbs in casts and advanced stages of pregnancy should also be noted; evacuation teams may coordinate with emergency responders to have these occupants assisted when evacuating the facility.

Prior planning and practice of emergency evacuation routes are important in assuring a safe evacuation.

IV. RETURN TO WORK

Once evacuated from a County building, employees shall wait in designated evacuation assembly point outside the building until instructed to re-enter, report to another County facility to complete their workday, or are dismissed for the remainder of the workday.

The County Judge, in coordination with elected officials and authorized Law Enforcement personnel, may authorize early dismissals in emergency situations.

V. EMERGENCY DRILLS/TRAINING PLANS

a. Conducting Drills

All County departments and offices will conduct drills to familiarize Employees with the Emergency Action Plans, routes of exit, and evacuation Assembly Point areas. Drills for all County facilities will be coordinated through the Facilities Management Department and the Hidalgo County Fire Marshal's Office.

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b. Conducting Training

All County departments and offices will conduct life safety training to familiarize employees with emergency safety procedures. Training will be coordinated by the Safety Division, Fire Marshal's Office, and Human Resources Department, during new employee orientation; with all offices and departments on a bi-annual basis; and when such training is deemed necessary by the Hidalgo County Fire Marshal's Office.

c. Testing Equipment/Systems

The Facilities Management Department in coordination with the Hidalgo County Fire Marshal's Office shall schedule periodic testing of all emergency evacuation notification equipment and systems with any and all contract vendors.

Unless otherwise directed by the Hidalgo County Fire Marshal's Office, emergency drills shall be conducted in accordance with Chapter 31 of the NFPA #101, Life Safety Code (2015 Edition).

Emergency drills shall be planned in advance by the Hidalgo County Fire Marshal's Office, in coordination with the Facilities Management Department. Affected County Offices or Departments will be notified of scheduled drills.

Large-scale emergency evacuation drills shall be jointly coordinated and scheduled by the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office, Fire Marshal's Office, Facilities Management Department, and other County Offices and Departments.

d. Evacuation Plan Criteria

Evacuation plans for County facilities shall:

- identify the signals to be used for the full or partial evacuation of each facility;
- describe evacuation routes and approved evacuation Assembly Points where employees will wait once outside the building;
- identify the location of evacuation route maps;

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- list evacuation teams and alternates who may assist in the evacuation of areas occupied by the offices or departments;
- list the names and work stations of employees who may require physical assistance during an evacuation; and
- be updated when building modifications are made; and submit to the Hidalgo County Fire Marshal's Office for review.