



Fire and Evacuation Guidelines for Budget Accommodation

e.g. Supported Accommodation, Hostels and Boarding Houses



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Purpose

This guideline will assist owner/occupiers of Budget Accommodation buildings in implementing fire and evacuation procedures in accordance with the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990*.

Fire Safety Management Plan

A copy of the fire and evacuation procedure must be placed within the FSMP in accordance with the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990*. For further information on the FSMP refer to the 'Fire Safety Management Plan Guidelines'.

Preparing Fire And Evacuation Procedures

The following procedures are designed to assist building owners/occupiers to comply with the requirements of Queensland Development Code Mandatory Part 2.1 - 'Fire Safety in Budget Accommodation Buildings'. Some buildings may need to make changes to comply with the requirements of this Code.

For the purpose of this guideline, budget accommodation buildings should be classified into two categories.

1. Buildings that do not contain employed staff.
2. Buildings that contain employed staff e.g. Managers, cleaners, maintenance personnel and others that are responsible for the day-to-day workings of the building.

1. Buildings that do not contain employed staff

For the purpose of this section, buildings will be classified as having a floor area:

- (i) <500 m²
- (ii) >500 m²

i) Buildings <500 m²

The occupier of a budget accommodation building must ensure that residents be instructed and made fully aware of their actions to be taken in the event of fire threatening the building. It is also the responsibility of the occupier to ensure a record of instruction is kept.

Information needed

All buildings are different and before developing a procedure the owner should survey the building and record the following details:

- Number and disability (if any) of occupants
- The number and location of exits
- The paths of travel to each exit.
- The location and type of first-response firefighting equipment. e.g. extinguishers and hose-reels.
- The location of the fire alarm panel (if installed) and manual call points (if installed).
- An acceptable location outside the building for an assembly point.

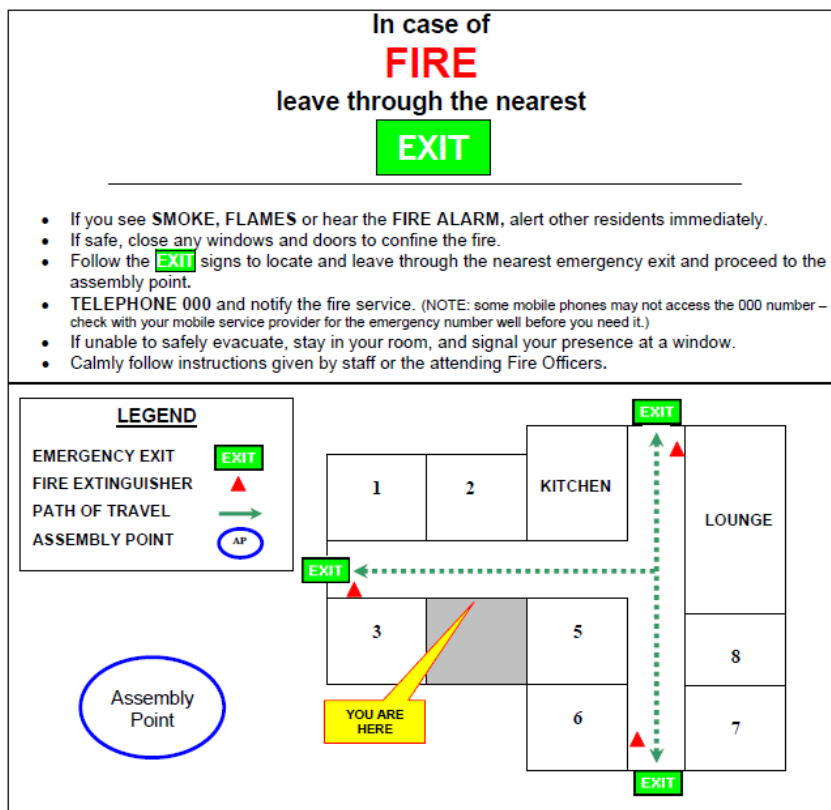
On gathering the above information the owner will need to draw the building relatively to scale indicating the room numbers, fire alarm panel, manual call points, firefighting equipment, exits, paths of travel to those exits (including stairs) and the assembly point.

A written procedure will need to be developed detailing the action to be taken by residents on hearing the alarm or in the event of fire threatening the building.

The main objective of the procedure is to evacuate residents to a place of safety.

Extinguishing the fire should only be attempted after all persons have been safely evacuated and only if it is safe to do so.

The following is a simple example showing a sign indicating the written instructions and drawing detailing the action to be taken in an emergency. The sign should be posted behind each bedroom door or in a conspicuous position within the room, and be orientated correctly. By doing this, residents will regularly view the sign and therefore become familiar with the location of exit paths and exit doors required to be used in an evacuation.



ii) Buildings >500 m²

Buildings of this size are usually more complex in design and required more detailed evacuation procedures. The example is for a simple building only and may not satisfy the safe evacuation of occupants in larger complex buildings. It is recommended that owners engage a professional to assist with the development and implementation of an evacuation plan.

2. Buildings that contain staff

In the event of fire occurring in the building, staff should perform certain duties to ensure the safety of all occupants as well as themselves. Depending on the number of staff employed and their roles, the duties performed may vary from one building to another.

In a small to medium sized budget accommodation building, (typically with a floor area less than 500m²), it would be likely that staffing numbers would be low, with perhaps a manager and a maintenance person in attendance.

The evacuation procedures should be designed with consideration for the involvement of staff as well as reflecting appropriate action for building occupants to take if staff are absent from the building.

Duties of Manager, or similar positions

The Manager, being the more senior staff member in the building, should assume the duties normally undertaken by a Chief Warden in larger buildings. Whereas it is assumed it would be the Manager performing these duties, there must be someone in a position of responsibility to ensure the efficient application of the evacuation procedures.

At regular intervals:

Inspections will ensure the ongoing maintenance of clear exit paths.

- (i) The Manager will ensure all corridors, pathways and walkways remain clear of obstructions. Regular inspections will ensure the ongoing maintenance of clear exit paths.
- (ii) Exit doors must remain clear and unlocked from the inside when the building is occupied to ensure efficient exit of residents in an evacuation.
- (iii) A practice of the evacuation procedures must take place to ensure that they are functional and efficient. Any problems that arise from a practice evacuation should be resolved immediately. All participants in the practice evacuation should be consulted to determine if they saw any problems with the practice evacuation.

- (iv) All occupants, upon taking up residence in the building, and at regular intervals while in residence, will be instructed on the evacuation procedure, namely:
- the steps to follow if evacuation is required,
 - the location of exit paths,
 - the location of exit doors, and
 - the location of firefighting equipment.

Adequate instruction would be to physically show residents the locations of exits paths, exits and firefighting equipment.

It is advisable to also provide instructions on:

- safe areas away from the building in which to assemble following evacuation,
- the location of fire alarms and their emitting sounds warning of fire.

In the event of a sounding alarm:

On hearing the fire alarms sounding, spotting a fire, or being informed by other people of a fire, the Manager will immediately:

- Oversee the complete evacuation of the building.
- After the building has been evacuated, and if safe to do so, investigate the fire situation.
- Ensure the Fire Service has been called. If there is any doubt regarding whether there is a fire situation, the Fire Service should still be called.

FIRE

If a fire has been found, the Manager should:

- Ensure the evacuation of the building – alert all occupants without further compromising life.
- Ensure the Fire Service has been notified.
- Account for all occupants at the assembly area.
- If any people are missing, conduct a search without compromising life. Missing people may not be necessarily still inside the building but could just not be at the safe outside assembly area.
- Attempt to extinguish the fire if trained and if it is safe to do so –

If the fire is small enough, use a nearby fire extinguisher or hose reel to control and extinguish the fire. Do not fight the fire if the following conditions exist:

- *You don't know what's burning*
- *The fire is spreading rapidly*
- *You don't have the proper equipment*
- *You cant do so with your back to an exit*
- *The fire might block your means of escape*
- *You might inhale toxic smoke*
- *Your instincts tell you not to do so*

It is wise and recommended for Managers and those responsible for the safety of building occupants to undertake accredited training in the use of fire fighting equipment. Nationally accredited training providers can be located in the local yellow pages phone book or general internet search.

- Meet the Fire Service on arrival and inform them of the situation. Even if the fire has been extinguished the Fire Service should still attend.

NO FIRE

If no fire is found, the Manager should:

- Inform residents of the situation.
- If the Fire Service has been called, ring the Fire Service to advise them of the situation. (The Fire Service will still attend.)
- Meet the Fire Service on arrival and inform them of the situation.

Further duties of the Manager

- The maintaining of an up-to-date list of the residents in the building.
- Nomination of a person to assume the emergency duties of the Manager in his absence.
- Arrangement and coordination of practice evacuation exercises.
- The accurate logging of the performance, any problems encountered, the conduct of a debriefing with everyone involved, and the continual improvement of the effectiveness of the evacuation plan.

Maintenance Officer, or similar

Other staff members should assist the Manager during all emergency procedures and assume the Manager's emergency duties in the Manager's absence.

The Manager and other staff members should never be simultaneously absent from the building. If the situation arises where they are absent at the same time then the emergency duties should be transferred to another responsible and trained person who will be present in the building.

Residents

Upon hearing the fire alarms sound, all residents should evacuate to the safe outside assembly area.

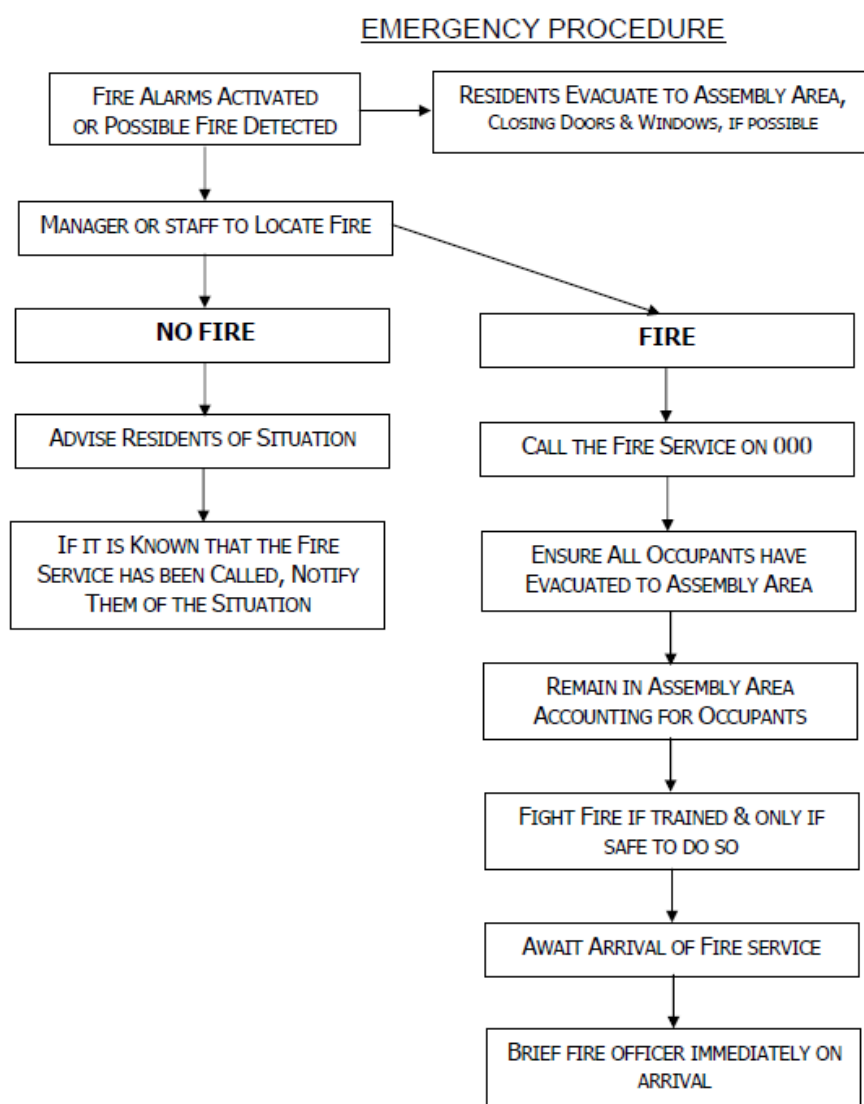
If possible, and if not hindering the evacuation of other residents, they should attempt to close doors and windows behind them, if it is safe.

All residents should remain in the assembly area until the situation is assessed and the accountability of all occupants is achieved. No one is to re-enter the building until advised by the Manager or the attending Fire Service Officer.

Accommodation Unit Signs

A sign detailing instructions should be posted behind each bedroom door or in a conspicuous position within the bedroom, and be orientated correctly. By doing this, residents will regularly view the sign and therefore become familiar with the location of exit paths and exit doors required to be used in an evacuation.

Residents and staff should be familiar with the location of exits and paths to reach exits prior to any emergency incident occurring. Refer to previous sign shown earlier in 'Buildings that do not contain employed staff'.



Evacuation Guidelines for Evacuating Impaired Persons

Q1. Do I have to prepare a Fire Safety Management Plan?

Yes. Owners of Budget Accommodation Buildings are required to prepare, update and implement a Fire Safety Management Plan. An evacuation procedure is required as part of the Fire Safety Management Plan to ensure all occupants, including those with mobility or other evacuation impairments can safely exit the building at all times. Owners/occupiers must ensure workers and residents receive adequate instructions regarding the evacuation procedure to follow in an emergency.

Q2. Why is an evacuation procedure important?

Smoke from a fire can very quickly cause the air inside a building to become unbreathable and dangerous. In excess of 85% of injury and deaths in fires are attributed to smoke, NOT the fire. Buildings can become saturated in smoke and fully involved in fire in very short periods of time. Evacuation times are reliant on occupant responses and reaction times to alarms. However, the safe evacuation time for your building can depend on a range of factors that include the nature of the building, the level of fire protection measures in the building, the use of the building and the likely nature of the fire. Also, behavioral models show that some people do not automatically respond to fire alarms. Response times are influenced by signs of danger such as the smell of smoke, or directions from a person in authority. In fact, some studies indicate a response time of up to 3 times the actual evacuation time. This is why the adequate evacuation procedure training is so important. Training and practice reduces the occupant response time to alarms or fire emergencies. A well-developed procedure may assist workers in giving clear voice directions to begin an evacuation.

Q3. How do I assess the capacity of occupants to evacuate the building?

You may have an induction process, you may observe potential occupants or you may use questionnaire forms on check-in. Also, you may visit and discuss the issue at regular intervals with persons at risk. A questionnaire is included in Schedule 5 of Queensland Development Code MP 2.1 which may be used or adapted for your use.

Q4. What criteria should I use to establish that a person is evacuation impaired?

Evacuation impairments can include but are not limited to the following:

- Occupants with mobility problems;
- Occupants with intellectual disabilities;
- Occupants requiring medication that could cause drowsiness or to assist them to sleep;
- Occupants with a hearing or vision impairment;
- Occupants with drug or alcohol problems.

You should make a practical assessment to ensure that the “at risk” person is able to evacuate safely and without assistance. In buildings with a 60m-travel distance a person must be able to evacuate within 60 seconds from their bedroom or any other place in the building to a place of safety outside the building. In a building with a maximum 30m-travel distance a person must be able to evacuate within 30 seconds. Able persons evacuate at a rate of approximately 1 metre per second. This should allow at least 1½-minutes for the person to recognise the alarm and prepare to evacuate. Persons who are not able to evacuate within these time frames should be considered as evacuation impaired for the purposes of this guideline. Also, persons who may not be able to hear the alarm must be adequately supervised.

Q5. How can an occupier ensure that evacuation impaired persons are properly protected?

Building occupiers must assess and monitor each occupant’s capacity to evacuate the building. All residents and workers must be instructed on the evacuation procedure and you must ensure the procedure is followed. If you accommodate persons with an evacuation impairment your current evacuation procedure must be adapted to protect those occupants.

Q6. What procedures should be used to protect evacuation impaired occupants?

Safety is paramount and occupants with an evacuation impairment should be accommodated on the ground floor, or at the same level as exit paths, and as close as possible to an exit or fire isolated enclosure. Persons should be assigned to assist evacuation impaired persons as required. Other occupants may be assigned the task of alerting or directing evacuation impaired persons, or checking that everyone has begun evacuating on the activation of an alarm.

Persons who cannot make safe egress unassisted must be supervised, and if adequate supervision is not available they should be accommodated in a more suitable building or location, or referred to another accommodation provider.

Workers should be instructed on evacuation techniques, such as carrying methods, alternative mobility options such as using wheelchairs, or using alternative exit paths and moving persons to a separate fire compartment. Workers should also participate in more regular evacuation exercises and fire drills organised by the occupier. A worker should remain with occupants to dispel the impression of abandonment.

Q7. What are my obligations if I accommodate evacuation impaired persons?

Workers must be adequately instructed regarding their duties, and the fire and evacuation procedures when they begin work. Residents must receive adequate fire and evacuation procedures instruction when they begin residing in the building. Induction methods and worker instruction must be recorded in the Fire Safety Management Plan. Impaired persons should have the building's evacuation procedures clearly explained to them and they should be asked to participate in fire evacuation drills.

Q8. When do the special evacuation procedures take effect and how should they work?

If evacuation impaired persons are accommodated in a budget accommodation building the special evacuation procedures must be followed. The building manager or another responsible person must ensure the evacuation impaired persons have the appropriate level of instruction and/or supervision and that workers or other helpers are fully aware of their roles and specific responsibilities. For example, if it is considered that a person does not require any supervision it may be sufficient for the person to be suitably located and instructed on the evacuation procedure. If the person requires evacuation assistance the helpers must know what they are to do and they should be assigned to a particular person.

If any evacuation impaired person is accommodated it is important that sufficient staff are on the premises to assist evacuations. Supervision ratios should never exceed five persons to one supervisor/ carer/helper as studies show that such evacuations quickly become impractical.

Q9. How can I tell if my plan works?

Once your evacuation procedure is documented it becomes part of the Fire Safety Management Plan. Occupiers must practice your evacuation procedure each year and the occupier of the building must keep a record of the practice drills.

If evacuation impaired persons are accommodated practice drills should take place more often. You should regularly test the evacuation procedure with simulations. As a test you may have a person act as an evacuation impaired resident. Time the evacuation practice.

You will be more likely to identify deficiencies in the evacuation procedure the more often you practice it. You should walk through the procedures and discuss them with workers or affected residents. You may wish to discuss the procedure at your local QFES Community Safety Office.

Q10. How long should the evacuation take?

Time must be allowed for workers or occupants to respond to the activation of fire alarms. This can be identified as time taken to:

- Hear the alarm – decide what I hear.
- React – considering what action to take and to begin evacuation.
- Locate the fire – workers locate the origin of the alarm.
- Evacuate – taking action and exiting the building.

If your building has smoke or fire compartments you may utilise these as part of a staged evacuation procedure. Please note also that evacuation training is of the utmost importance to reduce the delay in commencing evacuation. Practice will also improve total evacuation times. Occupiers may work with QFES Community Safety Officers to develop plans and rules that minimise accidental activations of the fire alarms. Reducing false alarms will reduce occupant complacency and will make the evacuation procedure more effective.

Q11. What if I don't live on site and have no manager?

Where direct supervision by a manager/carers/helpers or workers is not available your evacuation procedures must be designed with regard to a potential need for immediate assistance of each occupant. The resident / occupier induction procedures will become more important and you will need to carefully screen each potential occupant to ensure they can evacuate without assistance. Additionally, the development of a “Buddy System” may assist in ensuring safe evacuation from your building. Residents may be trained to raise the alarm appropriately and to check that others have safely evacuated.

Above all, the creation of a “safety first” culture within the building will assist in achieving safe evacuation. For example, over time residents may become aware of the temporary or more permanent changes to a person’s mobility. This may be caused by medication, illness, alcohol or other drug use, accidental injury, or even the effects of ageing. Communicating the importance and value of evacuation practice and encouraging resident co-operation will improve the chances of your evacuation procedure working when you need it to.

Q12. Where can I get further advice about evacuation procedures?

To contact your nearest QFES Community Safety Office, please go to our website using the following link: <https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/buildingsafety/>

For more information and templates, visit
www.qfes.qld.gov.au/buildingsafety/budget.asp