

PRINCIPLES OF EVACUATION

General

- The emergency procedures for facilities should include evacuation plans for the building.
- All members of staff should be familiar with the details of these plans and be trained in fire safety.
- It is essential that the plans are practised on a regular basis to ensure that evacuation can be carried out effectively in a real emergency.
- Because of differences in the layout of buildings, the evacuation methods should be developed to suit the individual circumstances.
- The procedures and techniques involved should be as simple as practicable and easily performed by a minimum number of staff.
- The presence of an adequate number of staff at all times to deal effectively with any emergency and to carry out evacuation as required is essential.
- The evacuation bag will be taken whenever evacuation is to occur.

Assessing the Situation

The situation should be assessed before the decision to evacuate is made. In doing this, consideration should be given to:

- the location of the fire;
- the seriousness and extent of the fire;
- the presence and extent of smoke;
- the proximity of flammable materials;
- whether the immediate action taken to control the fire is having the desired effect;
- the age and ability of children in the vicinity.

IF IN DOUBT, EVACUATE!

The authority to order the evacuation should be clearly established in the emergency procedures. The authorized persons should act on their own initiative, pending the arrival of the fire brigade. Evacuation should be conducted in distinct stages, as follows:

Stages of Evacuation:

- Phase 1:** Evacuation from the room/area of origin of the fire
- Phase 2:** Evacuation to a place of relative safety (behind a fire door)
- Phase 3:** Evacuation of parts of the building
- Phase 4:** Total evacuation of building to identified assembly points
- Phase 5:** Evacuation from assembly points to the identified relocation site

Evacuation Priorities

The first priority is to move any children or staff who are in immediate danger to a safe area. For the purpose of speedy evacuation, it is normal to carry out the evacuation in the following order of priorities:

- (a) ambulant children requiring only a member of staff to guide or direct them;
- (b) non-ambulant children/babies who have to be physically moved or carried.

Evacuation Techniques

Special care will be needed in the evacuation of non-ambulant children/babies. Various items of equipment may be employed to assist with evacuation, including wheeled trolleys and wheelchairs, blankets, carry sheets, stretchers, evacuation sheets, etc. It is important to ensure that a sufficient number of staff are available for effective evacuation, when required.

Shelter Outside the Facility (Relocation Site)

If the hazard is more widespread, it may be necessary to relocate the children and the staff to a shelter in a safe area. This relocation site should be convenient to the facility but far enough away to ensure safety. A relocation site should be agreed during emergency planning and all parents should be aware of its location. You may wish to have a formal agreement with the relocation facility and it is advised that you visit the potential relocation facility and explain the types of circumstances under which you may need to use their facility. This is a good opportunity to agree issues of notification, access and requirements while on site.