

Fire Emergency Response Plans – Know The Laws of Your Province



What kind of fire emergency response and evacuation policy must you implement at your workplace'

While fire prevention is the primary objective, OHS laws of most jurisdictions require employers to implement emergency response and evacuation plans in case a fire breaks out. There are two basic approaches. Some jurisdictions lay out detailed fire response plan requirements in their OHS laws. Among these jurisdictions, federal OHS laws are the most detailed and specific. Other jurisdictions, including Ontario, Manitoba, Quebec and the maritime provinces, say little or nothing about fire response plans in their OHS laws. While fire safety and evacuation is still required in these places, the origin of the duty comes from fire and building codes, rather than OHS laws. Here's a rundown of the OHS requirements in each part of Canada.

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OHS Rules on Fire Response Plans

FEDERAL

Emergency Plan: (1) Employer(s) in building where more than 50 employees at any time must create emergency evacuation plan, including for those requiring special assistance, in consultation with JHSC and other employers in building; (2) Plan must include:

- a plan of the building, showing (i) the building name, if any, and address, (ii) the building owner's name and address, (iii) tenants' names and locations, (iv) the date of preparation of the plan, (v) the scale of the plan, (vi) the location of the building in relation to nearby streets and all buildings and other structures located within 30 m of the building, (vii) the maximum number of persons normally occupying the building at any time, (viii) a horizontal projection of the building, showing its principal dimensions, and (ix) the number of floors above and below ground level;
- a plan of each floor of the building, showing (i) the building's name, if any, and address, (ii) the date of preparation of the plan, (iii) the scale of the plan, (iv) a horizontal projection of the floor, showing its principal dimensions, (v) the number of the floor to which the plan applies, (vi) the maximum number of persons normally occupying the floor at any time, (vii) the location of all fire escapes, fire exits, stairways, elevating devices, main corridors and other exits, (viii) the location of all fire protection equipment, and (ix) the location of the main electric power switches for the lighting system, elevating devices, principal heating, ventilation and air-conditioning equipment and other electrical equipment;
- a full description of the evacuation procedures for evacuating the building, with the time required to complete the evacuation, including (i) activating the fire alarm, (ii) notifying the fire department, and (iii) evacuating employees who require special assistance; and
- the names, room numbers and telephone numbers of the chief emergency warden and the deputy chief emergency warden of the building appointed by the employer(s);

(3) Emergency evacuation plan must be kept up-to-date and updated in accordance with any changes in the building or the nature of its occupancy; (4) Employer must keep up-to-date copy of plan in the building to which it refers (*COHS Regs*, Sec. 17.4)

Emergency Procedures: (1) Every employer, regardless of number of workers, must, after consultation with the JHSC and other employers in the building, prepare emergency procedures to be implemented: (a) if a person commits or threatens to commit an act, other than an occurrence of harassment and violence, that may be hazardous to the health and safety of the employer or any of their employees; (b) if there's an accumulation, spill or leak of a hazardous substance (if that risk exists); (c) if more than 50 employees are working in a building at any time, if an evacuation isn't an appropriate means of ensuring employees' health and safety; (d) in the event of a failure of the lighting system; and (e) in the event of a fire; (2) Emergency procedures must contain: (a) an emergency evacuation plan, where applicable, or a plan for evacuating employees who require special assistance to be implemented in the event of a fire; (b) a full description of the procedures; (c) the location of the emergency equipment provided by the employer; and (d) a plan of the building, showing (i) the building's name, if any, and address of the building, (ii) the name and address

of the owner of the building; (3) The plan for evacuation of employees who require special assistance must be established in consultation with those employees (*COHS Regs*, Sec. 17.5)

Instructions & Training: (1) All employees must be instructed and trained in (a) the procedures to be followed by them in the event of an emergency; and (b) the location, use and operation of fire protection equipment and emergency equipment provided by the employer; and (2) Notices setting out the details of the evacuation plans and procedures must be posted at locations accessible to every employee at the work place (*COHS Regs*, Sec. 17.6)

Emergency Wardens: (1) Employer(s) must appoint (a) a chief emergency warden and deputy chief emergency warden for the building and for each floor of the building that the employer's employees occupy; and (b) monitors for any employee who require special assistance in evacuating the building; (2) The chief emergency warden and deputy chief emergency warden appointed for a building must be employees normally employed in the building; (3) The emergency warden and deputy emergency warden appointed for a floor must be employees normally employed on that floor and monitors for an employee who requires special assistance must be employees who are normally employed on the same floor as the employee requiring special assistance; (4) Emergency wardens, deputy wardens and monitors appointed must be instructed and trained in (a) their responsibilities under the emergency evacuation plan and procedures; and (b) the use of fire protection equipment; (5) Employer must keep a record of all instruction and training provided in the work place to which it applies for 2 years from the date on which the instruction or training is provided; (6) A qualified person must carry out a visual inspection of every building requiring an emergency evacuation plan at least once every 6 months and that covers all fire escapes, exits, stairways and fire protection equipment in the building to ensure that they're in serviceable condition and ready for use at all times; (7) The person who inspects must create, sign and date a record of each inspection, which the employer must keep in the building for 2 years after it's signed; (8) At least once a year and after any change is made in the emergency evacuation plan or procedures: (a) emergency wardens, deputy emergency wardens, monitors, and employees requiring special assistance must meet to ensure they're familiar with the emergency evacuation plan and procedures and their responsibilities under them; (b) an evacuation or emergency drill must be conducted for the employees in the building; (9) Employer must keep records of each meeting and drill for 2 years listing (a) for each meeting, (i) the date of the meeting, (ii) the names and titles of those present, and (iii) a summary of the matters discussed; and (b) for each drill, (i) the date and time of the drill, and (ii) where applicable, the length of time taken to evacuate the building; and (10) Employer must notify the local fire department for the building where an evacuation or emergency drill is to take place at least 24 hours in advance (*COHS Regs*, Secs. 17.7 to 10)

ALBERTA

(1) Employer must, with the workers' involvement, establish and keep current an emergency response plan for an emergency that may require rescue or evacuation that lists: (a) identified potential emergencies; (b) procedures for dealing with identified emergencies; (c) the identification of, location of and operational procedures for emergency equipment and PPE; (d) the emergency response training requirements; (e) the location and use of emergency

facilities; (f) the fire protection requirements; (g) the alarm and emergency communication requirements; (h) the first aid services required; (i) procedures for rescue and evacuation; and (j) the designated rescue and evacuation workers; (2) Employer must designate the workers to provide rescue services and supervise evacuation procedures in an emergency and ensure they're trained in emergency response appropriate to the work site and potential emergencies identified in the emergency response plan; (3) Training must include exercises appropriate to the work site that simulate the potential emergencies identified in the emergency response plan, which are repeated at the intervals required to ensure that the designated rescue and evacuation workers are competent to carry out their duties (4) Employer must provide designated rescue and evacuation workers with equipment and PPE appropriate to the work site and potential emergencies identified in the emergency response plan; and (5) Workers who respond to an emergency must wear and use equipment and PPE appropriate to the work site and emergency (*OHS Code*, Secs. 115 ' 117)

BRITISH COLUMBIA

(1) Employer must conduct a risk assessment in any workplace where a need to rescue or evacuate workers may arise; (2) If risk assessment shows a need for evacuation or rescue, appropriate written procedures must be developed and implemented, and a worker assigned to coordinate their implementation; (3) Written rescue and evacuation procedures are required for but not limited to workplaces with persons who require physical assistance to be moved; (4) Emergency means of escape must be provided from any work area in which the malfunctioning of equipment or a work process could create an immediate danger to workers and the regular means of exit could become dangerous or unusable; (5) Emergency exit routes must be designed and marked to provide quick and unimpeded exit; (6) At least once a year emergency drills must be held to ensure awareness and effectiveness of emergency exit routes and procedures, and a record of the drills must be kept; (7) All workers must be given adequate instruction in the workplace fire prevention and emergency evacuation procedures; (8) Workers assigned to firefighting duties in their workplace must be given adequate training, by a qualified instructor, in fire suppression methods, fire prevention, emergency procedures, organization and chain of command, firefighting crew safety and communications applicable to the workplace, with retraining at least once a year; (9) A worker not covered by Part 31 of the OHS Reg. [Firefighting], who's assigned to firefighting duties, must be physically capable of performing the assigned duties safely and effectively before being permitted to do them; and (10) If workplace has one or more hazardous products covered by WHMIS, explosives, pesticides, radioactive material, consumer products or hazardous wastes in quantities that may endanger firefighters, employer must ensure the local fire department is notified of the nature and location of the hazardous materials or substances and methods to be used in their safe handling, unless either: (a) materials are kept on site for less than 15 days if the employer ensures an alternative effective means for notification of fire departments is in place in the event of fire or other emergency, or (b) the workplace isn't within the service area of a fire department (*OHS Regs*, Secs. 4.13 ' 4.17)

MANITOBA

A required workplace safety and health program must include, among other things,

the procedures to be followed in an emergency and the internal and external resources, including personnel and equipment, that may be required to respond to an emergency at the workplace (*WSH Act*, Sec. 7.4(5))

NEW BRUNSWICK

Fire response plans and procedures not expressly addressed by OHS laws but are required under fire codes

NEWFOUNDLAND

Worker must get adequate instruction in the workplace's fire prevention and emergency evacuation procedures (*OHS Regs*, Sec. 41)

NOVA SCOTIA

(1) Worker must get adequate instruction in the workplace's fire prevention and emergency evacuation procedures; and (2) Employer must provide adequate information to ensure that every person in the workplace is able to exit in a safely in the event of an emergency (*OHS Act General Regs.*, Secs. 41 and 140(2))

ONTARIO

Addressed in Fire Code rather than OHS laws: (1) Covered buildings must have a fire safety plan that: (a) lists the emergency procedures to be followed in case of fire, including (i) sounding the fire alarm, (ii) notifying the fire department, (iii) instructing occupants on procedures to be followed when the fire alarm sounds, (iv) evacuating occupants, including special provisions for persons requiring assistance, (v) procedures for use of elevators, and (vi) confining, controlling and extinguishing the fire; (b) provide for the appointment and organization of supervisory staff to carry out fire safety duties; (c) provide for the training of supervisory staff and the instruction of other occupants in their responsibilities for fire safety; (d) include documents and diagrams showing the type, location and operation of the building fire emergency systems; (e) provide for the holding of fire drills and set out fire drill procedures; (f) provide for the control of fire hazards in the building; (g) provide for the maintenance of building facilities provided for the safety of occupants; and (h) provide for alternative measures to be provided for the safety of occupants during a shutdown of any or all fire protection equipment or systems; (2) The fire safety plan must be kept in the building or premises in an approved location and reviewed as often as necessary, but at least every 12 months, and revised as necessary so that it takes into account changes in the use or other characteristics of the building or premises; (3) There must be sufficient supervisory staff available to carry out the duties as required in the fire safety plan's special requirements apply to high buildings; (4) At least one copy of the fire emergency procedures must be prominently posted and maintained on each floor area; (5) Fire safety plan must include procedure for conducting fire drills; and (6) Fire drills must be held for supervisory staff at least once a year described in Clause 2.8.2.1.(2)(e) shall be included in the

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Fire response plans and procedures not expressly addressed by OHS laws but are required under fire codes

QUÉBEC

(1) In any establishment, an emergency evacuation plan must be drawn up and be in force; (2) Rescue and evacuation drills must be held at least once a year; and (3) Drills must be adapted to risks found in the establishment as well as to the nature of activities carried on there (*OHS Regs*, Secs. 34 – 35)

SASKATCHEWAN

(1) Employer, contractor or owner must: (a) take all reasonably practicable steps to prevent outbreak of fire at a place of employment and to provide effective means to protect workers from any fire that may occur; and (b) develop and implement a written fire safety plan that provides for the safety of all workers; (2) Fire safety plan must include: (a) the emergency procedures to be used in case of fire, including: (i) sounding the fire alarm; (ii) notifying the fire department; and (iii) evacuating endangered workers, with special provisions for workers with disabilities; (b) the quantities, locations and storage methods of all flammable substances present at the place of employment; (c) the designation of persons to carry out the fire safety plan and duties of the designated persons; (d) the training of designated persons and workers in their responsibilities for fire safety; (e) the holding of fire drills; and (f) the control of fire hazards; (3) An employer, contractor or owner must ensure that: (a) designated persons and workers assigned fire safety duties are adequately trained in, and implement, the fire safety plan; (b) the fire safety plan is posted in a conspicuous place; and (c) a fire drill is held at least once a year (*OHS Regs*, Sec. 25-2)

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES & NUNAVUT

(1) During the investigation and pending the determination of danger/no danger, worker must remain in a safe place at or near the place of the investigation during their normal working hours and with no loss of pay, unless the employer, subject to a collective agreement, assigns the worker to temporary alternative work that the worker is competent to perform; and (2) If investigation finds work poses undue danger, no person may perform the work until: (a) the employer takes steps to eliminate the unusual danger; and (b) the JHSC or delegate of the Chief Safety Officer is satisfied that the unusual danger no longer exists and so notifies the refusing worker

(1) Employer must: (a) take reasonable steps to prevent the outbreak of fire at a work site and provide effective means to protect workers from a fire that could occur; and (b) develop and implement a written fire safety plan that provides for the safety of workers in the event of a fire; (2) Fire safety plan must include (a) emergency procedures in case of fire, including (i) sounding the fire alarm, (ii) notifying the fire department, and (iii) evacuating endangered workers, with special provisions for workers with disabilities; (b) quantities, locations and storage methods of flammable substances present at the work site; (c) provisions that designate individuals to carry out the plan and

the duties of those individuals; (d) provisions that outline the training of individuals designated under paragraph (c) and of workers in their responsibilities for fire safety; (e) provisions that indicate when fire drills are held; and (f) provisions that outline how fire hazards are controlled; and (3) Employer must ensure that (a) individuals designated under paragraph (2)(c) and workers been assigned fire safety duties are adequately trained in, and implement, the fire safety plan; (b) the fire safety plan is posted in a conspicuous place; and (c) a fire drill is held at least once a year (*OHS Regs*, Sec. 394)

YUKON

An emergency plan appropriate to the workplace needs and conditions must be developed and implemented (*OHS Regs*, Sec. 1.69)