



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA FIRE DEPARTMENT

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PHILADELPHIA FIRE CODE SHELTERING-IN-PLACE REQUIREMENTS

The Philadelphia Fire Code requires various buildings to develop a plan to shelter occupants inside the building in the event of a hazardous material, biological or other emergency outside the building. The following are the requirements and a sample shelter-in-place plan that building owners can use as a guide in preparing the plan for their building. Following the sample plan are questions asked by building owners regarding shelter-in-place requirements in the Fire Code. Each question is followed by an answer prepared by the Fire Department and the Department of Licenses and Inspections. The questions and answers are intended to interpret and clarify the requirements in the Fire Code. Persons having additional questions can call the Fire Department's Fire Code Unit at 215-686-1356.

F-409.1 General. All occupancy groups and buildings that are required to have a fire safety and evacuation plan [See F-404.2 listed below.] shall also prepare and maintain a specific plan for sheltering occupants in place (inside the building). The plan shall be placed into effect when notified by local, state or federal officials that an outdoor hazardous materials or biological emergency exists that makes it unsafe for occupants to leave buildings.

F-409.2 Shelter-in-place plan. Shelter-in-place plans shall provide for the safety of building occupants from outdoor contaminants. Building managers shall identify suitable pre-determined shelter rooms or areas with as few windows, vents and doors as possible. Shelter areas shall contain a water supply for both drinking and toilet facilities. Plans shall require that all doors and windows be shut (and locked where locking provides a tighter seal) and all air handling equipment (heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems) be shut down. To provide necessary protection, sealing windows, doors and vents with tape is permitted.

F-409.3 All clear announcement. When an all clear message is announced, building managers shall direct people in shelter areas to proceed to the exterior of the building, open all windows and doors and turn on air handling equipment to facilitate exhausting any contaminants that have infiltrated the building. Further instructions will be available via radio and television broadcasts.

F-409.4 Training. A copy of the shelter-in-place plan shall be given to all employees and tenants. Employees required to assist in carrying out the plan shall receive training at least annually. A record of all training shall be maintained at the building.

F-409.5 Shelter-in-place drills. A shelter-in-place drill shall be conducted once annually for all occupancies required to have a plan and twice annually for Group E (educational) occupancies. Each required shelter-in-place drill for Group E occupancies can be substituted for one fire drill.

F-404.2. Fire safety and evacuation plan. A fire safety and evacuation plan [and a shelter-in-place plan] shall be prepared and maintained for the following occupancies and buildings:

High-rise buildings.

Assembly, other than those used exclusively for purposes of religious worship that have an occupant load less than 2,000.

Educational.

High hazard.

Institutional.

Hotel, motels and short term (30 days or less) boarding homes.

Residential care/assisted living facilities with more than five occupants excluding staff.

Mercantile buildings having an occupant load of 500 or more persons or more than 100 persons above or below the lowest level of exit discharge.

Covered malls exceeding 50,000 square feet in aggregate floor area.

Underground buildings.

Buildings with atriums with an assembly, educational or mercantile occupancy.

PHOENIX HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTER SHELTER-IN-PLACE PLAN (Sample Plan) DATE

Purpose of Plan

The Philadelphia Fire Code requires various buildings to develop a plan to shelter occupants inside the building in the event of a hazardous material, biological or other emergency outside the building. The purpose of the shelter-in-place plan is to safeguard occupants during an emergency outside the building by preventing or limiting the infiltration of hazardous materials into the building by closing windows and doors and shutting off air handling/HVAC systems, and by moving occupants away from perimeter windows and doors to safer locations in the building. Where possible these locations will be near restrooms. Once each year a shelter-in-place drill will be conducted to ensure occupants know what to do and where to go during an emergency. Persons responsible for performing duties during the emergency will be provided with training.

Procedures

Building management will announce when a shelter-in-place emergency is occurring. When an emergency is announced occupants should immediately go to their designated shelter location. Occupants that have portable radios or cell phones should take them with them. Tune radios to news stations to listen for instructions and updates related to the emergency. Handicapped persons requiring assistance will be assisted to their shelter location.

The following persons are responsible at the onset of an emergency to ensure that exterior doors and windows are closed and air-handling systems are shut down:

Basement - Engineer John Matthews - shut down of air handling systems.
First Floor – John Jones and Steven Williams – close doors and windows.

Shelter Locations

First Floor - occupants will go to the conference room.
Second Floor - occupants will go to Room 202.

Handicapped Persons

The following persons are handicapped and will be assisted by the following persons:

Eighth Floor, Apartment 8-C - Claire Johnson (wheelchair bound) will be assisted by Herman Little.

All Clear

When notified that the emergency is over, building management will direct occupants outdoors until building air-handling systems are operated to remove any contaminants.

Annual Shelter-In-Place Drill

The annual shelter-in-place drill will be conducted on Saturday, July 15th at 11:00 a.m.

If you have any questions please call the rental office at 215-804-9000.

Questions and Answers Regarding Sheltering-in-Place Requirements

1. Can building management put the responsibility on tenants to prepare their own shelter-in-place plan and submit it to the management office?

Answer – Building owners are responsible for ensuring that there is a plan, and that it is maintained and properly distributed. The Fire Code does not address who prepares a plan. Building management can request that tenants prepare a plan for their floor. Once a plan is completed, tenants are required to comply with the plan.

2. Can fire wardens and floor captains (used during fire emergencies to coordinate evacuation of a building) be required to implement a shelter-in-place plan?

Answer – A building owner is responsible for the development and implementation of a plan. Building occupants can be designated in the plan to perform one or more tasks. When so designated they must be provided with the appropriate training.

3. If a building has retail tenants that have customers and/or visitors, how should they be sheltered-in-place?

Answer – Provisions should be made to shelter-in-place all occupants that may normally be expected to be in a building at the time of an emergency.

4. If retail tenants have access to the building lobby, how does building management prevent them from entering the lobby, especially if the door to the lobby is a second means of egress and part of a fire exit?

Answer – At the time of an emergency, tenants are required to follow the shelter-in-place plan for their floor, including whatever requirements building management has placed in the plan for the safety of tenants. Locking egress doors (preventing egress from the building) is not permitted by the Fire Code at any time a building is occupied, including during a shelter-in-place emergency.

5. Should elevators be recalled and/or shut down?

Answer – The Fire Code does not address this issue for shelter-in-place procedures. Building management can do what they believe is best for building occupants.

6. Is it permissible to lock the building entry doors and not allow entrance to the building if the door is not a fire exit?

Answer - The Fire Code does not restrict the locking of doors to the exterior that are not exit doors. It does state that exit doors can not be locked in such a manner that prevents egress from a building.

7. Is a shelter-in-place plan required for each floor of a building?

Answer – No. A plan is required to accommodate all of the occupants in a building. If building management believes that it is best for occupants of two or more floors to shelter-in-place on one floor that is permitted.

8. Are the existing restroom facilities in a building adequate for meeting the requirement to provide drinking and toilet facilities?

Answer – Yes.

9. Is evacuation of the building necessary after a drill, as is required after an emergency?

Answer – Evacuation of a building is not required after a drill. The purpose of occupants evacuating a building after an emergency is to permit the building's air handling system to remove any contaminants that may have entered the building.

10. Is the shelter-in-place plan part of the International Fire Code?

Answer – No. The plan is a requirement of the Philadelphia Fire Code. The International Fire Code was adopted and amended by the City of Philadelphia. One of the amendments was the shelter-in-place requirements.

11. Can a shelter-in-place plan be rectified and/or modified in the future?

Answer – Yes. Modifications to a plan can be made whenever building management believes changes are necessary. Each tenant or employee should have a copy of the plan and a copy should be available for review if requested by a fire code official.

12. Can the current shelter-in-place plan be amended? Specifically Section F-409.2 that requires all doors and windows be shut (and locked where locking provides a tighter seal) and all air handling equipment (heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems) be shut down. The section also indicates that to provide necessary protection, sealing windows, doors and vents with tape is permitted?

Answer – Yes the requirements can be amended, but a process must be followed. Since requirements in the Fire Code are laws, amendments to the Fire Code must be reviewed by the city's Law Department and approved by City Council. The shelter-in-place procedures in the Fire Code require that all windows and doors be closed and all air-handling systems be shut down. Locking of doors and windows is an option to provide a tighter seal if necessary. Tape is not required to be placed over all windows and doors, but is a method that can be used as a way to prevent contaminants from entering a building if a window or door does not close properly. If building management desires to deviate from specific requirements in the Fire Code, such as having the air handling system in the building operate during an emergency, approval must be obtained from the Fire Department.

13. Should a shelter-in-place plan be incorporated in the training of floor captains and/or fire wardens?

Answer – Yes. Floor captains and fire wardens and any other persons that are designated to assist in a shelter-in-place plan should receive training in their duties.

14. Will the Department of Licenses and Inspections accept the sample plan presented by Fire Department, entitled the Phoenix Hotel and Conference Center, Sample Shelter-In-Place Plan, if building managers choose to use the same format as their shelter-in-place plan?

Answer – Yes. An acceptable plan is any one that address the requirements in the Fire Code. The plan can contain additional information that building management believes is necessary in the event of a shelter-in-place emergency.

15. What is the protocol for allowing non-tenants in a building during an emergency?

Answer – The Fire Code does not address this issue, but the intent of the requirements is to provide for all persons that may be in the area of an emergency.

16. Should office buildings in Center City plan on offering refuge for pedestrians and motorists during a shelter-in-place emergency or have other arrangements been made?

Answer – This issue is not addressed in the Fire Code, but the intent of the shelter-in-place requirements is to provide for the safety of all persons in the area of an emergency.

17. What is the time element expected for sheltering people in place?

Answer – There are no specified or known time frames. The city will deal with an emergency as quickly as possible and permit building occupants to resume normal operations as soon as it is safe to do so.

18. Will sheltering people on their prospective leased floors serve as a shelter-in-place location if windows are non-operational?

Answer – Yes. Where occupants are sheltered-in-place is decided by building management or by agreement between building management and tenants. If it is determined that the most appropriate location for a shelter is on a floor and the floor has windows (operational or non-operational) that is permitted.

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