



# Fire Prevention Tips

A fire can be a catastrophic event, leading to destruction of property or loss of life. To ensure that your staff and employees are protected in the event that a fire breaks out, it is essential that every business have a fire safety plan in place. This fire safety plan should include a detailed evacuation plan that all employees are made aware of so they can exit the building quickly in the event of a fire.

## Fire Suppression Systems

In most businesses, and especially restaurants, fire suppression systems should be installed. Fire suppression systems are complex devices that are strategically placed in different areas of the office building or kitchen. They will automatically trigger when the temperature in the room indicates a fire or they can be manually turned on by pulling an emergency switch, which will then release chemicals onto the fire-prone locations to extinguish the fires.

Restaurants and offices should have the fire suppression systems installed professionally, in compliance with fire codes. After installation, the system must be inspected and certified annually. In addition to hood fire suppression systems, fire extinguishers must be annually inspected and certified to ensure they comply with code requirements. Grills and exhaust hoods should be kept clean of grease at all times and grease filters must be in place anytime cooking is taking place.

Employees should be properly trained in the use of a fire extinguisher and made aware of existing sprinkler systems, hood fire suppression systems, and locations of all fire extinguishers.

## Evacuation Plan

Every workplace or business establishment must have an evacuation plan. Keep in mind, however, that even the most perfect plan will be useless if it is not practiced and trained upon. Go through the evacuation plan and make sure that every staff member and employee is knowledgeable about what to do.

The plan should include which exits to use, and employees should be aware of the number of steps required to reach the exit in case there are visibility problems. Every establishment should have at least two exits in case one of them is blocked. If the fire alarm sounds, employees and customers will look for direction. Never ignore a fire alarm. There are many ways that a fire alarm may be activated which may not be immediately obvious. Use the evacuation plan and strictly follow it. Post the evacuation plan and perform fire drills to ensure you and your staff are experts at it. Make the necessary provisions for any disabled workers and take into account how you will help any visitors present during a fire but unfamiliar with your plan. On a monthly basis, test emergency lighting systems to ensure that you can find your way out in the event of a power failure.

## Comply with All Fire Safety Codes

It is also essential to comply with all fire safety codes. Locally, we enforce National Fire Protection Association Life Safety Code 101 to regulate fire safety. National Fire Protection Association Life Safety Code 101 contains specific provisions on exits, fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and other life-saving devices. For example, at least two exits must be provided in buildings, exits must be clearly marked and labeled, and exits cannot be obstructed.

## Company Policies

Always follow established company guidelines and policies regarding fire and life safety. Please understand that these are only our recommendations and are not intended to replace or supersede any existing company or corporate policies which may be in place. If you do not have established protocols, our Prevention Division can work with you to develop guidelines specific to your business.

For more information on life safety codes and fire prevention, visit <http://www.normalfire.org> or contact Normal Fire Department Prevention Division at 309-454-9622.