RISK CONTROL BULLETIN

Planning for Emergency Evacuation

If you are responsible for the safety of visitors or guests, whether you operate a huge outdoor arena or a storefront business:

- How would you handle a bomb threat?
- Where would you guide your patrons if immediate evacuation is needed, whether for bomb threat or other reason?
- How do you deal with patrons with disabilities?
- Who makes sure people in restrooms, locker rooms, etc., are notified and are vacated along with the others?
- Who makes all these decisions and how do you communicate with that person and vice versa?
- Who in the community can help you with the answers?

There are a lot of little things that must come together for an emergency evacuation to happen. The first is to recognize that the need is rare, and because of that, readiness must come from pre-planning rather than "winging it." If pre planning enabled an NFL Club to safely evacuate its stadium during a game (as one did in 1991) to protect fans from an oncoming electrical storm, it can work for you also.

The details within a plan can be extensive or relatively brief. Everyone has their own needs, circumstances, and preferences. However, there are six considerations needed in any plan:

1. The decision-making process
2. The information-awareness process
3. The egress-preparation process
4. The egress process
5. The return process
6. The evaluation process

Decision-Making

- Who is the point-person needed to make the decision of whether and when the evacuation is "go"? Who is his/her backup?
- Who are the others needed to share in the pre-decision process, coordinating the major steps within the evacuation process, communicating with the community's fire/police and press, etc.?
- Are all the people with responsibility known and readily accessible?

Information-Awareness

- What criteria are in place for choosing to act? For example, how long before a storm is expected to hit should the decision be made to evacuate a jobsite or cease outdoor operations?
- How best can needed information be obtained in time for that decision? For outdoor operations, a functional link with the local weather station for receiving and evaluating storm warnings in the area works well for many.
- While management can determine who is the communications link for weather problems, bomb threats can come to anyone. Is planning in place for managing that different source of threat, how about for fire or earthquake?

Egress Preparation

- Is there egress preparation planning that determines in advance how the decision maker can best alert the appropriate personnel that a decision to evacuate is being considered?
- Planning should provide readiness to ensure best routes of egress for the number of evacuees and the preferred area of refuge. It can also ensure keeping inbound lanes open for fire trucks and ambulances.

Egress Process

- When emergency staff has been advised of the decision to evacuate, is there provision to announce directions to guide the evacuation? Pre-planned announcements, given succinctly and calmly, repeating the message several times, can do much to minimize panic or disorderly egress. The same information can be posted at strategic locations.
- Are there planned "sweeps" to check for lingerers, persons with disabilities, and anyone who suffers injury during egress?
- Is there "contingency planning" for those occasions in which an egress route is blocked? Alternative routes need to be thought through well in advance of any need for such.

Return Process

- Does planning allow for emergency evacuation that is considered precautionary and potentially temporary? How and when is the "all-clear" to be given?
- How is this communicated first to the same staff who handled egress preparation?

Evaluation Process

- Is there a written detailed document for common reference and training, and common understanding of its contents?
- Are there periodic communication drills and subsequent refinement based on the experience?
- Any plan can be improved if reviewed and tested, in part or in full, both by experts in the community and by the staff on which the plan relies.

This publication is not part of your policy. This publication is provided for informational purposes only and does not attempt to identify all potential issues, situations, hazards, or remedial actions. FCCI Insurance Group* and its affiliates and subsidiaries are making no representations and providing no legal advice and shall not be liable for any loss, injury, death, damage or expense arising out of the use of this information. You are solely responsible for complying with all relevant laws, including any changes in the law, and for the safety and protection of your operations.

* The FCCI Insurance Group includes the following insurance carriers: FCCI Insurance Company, FCCI Commercial Insurance Company, National Trust Insurance Company, Monroe Guaranty Insurance Company, FCCI Advantage Insurance Company, and Brierfield Insurance Company.