EVACUATION PLANNING

The following information should assist you in developing evacuation plans and procedures for your firm. These suggestions cannot guarantee an effective plan for all locations because each plan must be crafted to meet the needs and regulatory requirements of different environments. Evacuation planning should be integrated with any emergency response organizations currently in place.

- Determine who will coordinate and authorize the evacuation. Assign an alternate to this person. Employees should be trained to activate fire alarms in case of a fire.

- Develop emergency escape routes that comply with local regulations. Ensure your plan is consistent with legal requirements such as proper signage, unobstructed evacuation routes that do not lead to or through hazardous areas, proper number of and distance to exits, etc. If the emergency is minor, it may only be necessary to relocate employees to a safe location within the building. In high-rise buildings, consider if it is appropriate to evacuate only the three-four floors above the incident and the two-three floors below the incident.

- List methods used to notify employees of an evacuation.   This can include activation of the fire alarm or other distinctive audio/visual warning (be certain warnings can be heard in all locations of the facility), public address system announcements (develop scripted warning messages that can be adapted to the immediate situation), or word of mouth by Floor Wardens or Supervisors.

- If it can be done **safely**, establish procedures to shut down hazardous processes prior to evacuation.

- Establish assembly points. Indicate the assembly points in the Emergency Action Guide or on wall maps. If feasible, place a sign, placard, or paint yellow/bright orange markings on the ground to indicate the location(s) employees are to assemble. Assembly points should be a reasonable distance from the building so that employees and guests are not injured by the emergency or by other dangers and they should not be located in an area that may impede emergency operations or equipment.

- Ensure all employees and guests evacuate. Floor Wardens can be designated to sweep an assigned area to check that all have evacuated or to help the disabled. Consider assigning 'partners' to assist the disabled. If necessary, purchase special equipment such as an 'evacuation chair' and train potential users on its location and operation.

- Develop a method to account for employees and guests. This can be accomplished through the use of a sign-in log or by the area supervisor(s) taking a roll call of their employees and guests. Notify emergency officials if anyone is not accounted for.

- Establish procedures and guidelines to be followed when returning to the building. This should include a method to check if the building is safe to re-occupy and designate who has the authority to notify evacuees when it is safe to re-enter.

- Document the plan. Include the procedures in your Emergency Action Guide or list them on wall mounted evacuation maps.

- Train all employees on notification, evacuation procedures, roles, and responsibilities. Include instructions that employees are to immediately leave by the nearest exit and not return to the work area to obtain personal effects, not to use elevators, to go immediately to the assembly area (don't stop at your car) and remain at their assembly point until instructed otherwise, and not to re-enter the building until the 'all clear' is given, etc.

- Keep the plan up to date. The plan and procedures should be reviewed at least annually or after a major change in the internal or external configuration of the building. Provide for the training of newly hired or transferred employees.