

Planning For Emergencies - Evacuation Plans Practice Guideline



Purpose:

It is incumbent upon a professional owners corporation manager (OCM) to be aware of circumstances that pose a risk to owners corporations in an emergency incident, and correspondingly to create this same awareness amongst the OC members and inform them of the appropriate measures to avoid such incidents.

Emergency situations such as fire, bomb threats etc. may pose a risk to:

- people (service providers, residents and their visitors to the OC complex) and
- property (common and private)
- be aware also of a situation that may affect an OC's records, (ie in the event of an incident at the place the records are maintained and/or archived).

This Practice Guideline has been created to clarify the obligations of an owners corporation (OC) to plan for evacuation of its building in the event of an emergency. It also clarifies the role of the owners corporation manager (OCM) who is engaged to assist in managing the risk to owners corporations.

Under the current Occupational Health and Safety laws, and under the proposed Model Work Health & Safety Act if and when it is adopted, any obligation imposed on an OC, becomes a shared obligation with an owners corporation manager, when appointed.

It is the intention of SCA (Vic) to help OC Managers to understand when it is mandatory to act and what is considered best practice. This Practice Guideline will also provide references enabling access to additional information to support your knowledge and advise on the practical application of any plans

SCA (Vic) recognises that not all OCs are the same. They differ by building classification (relevant to the application of Australian Standard 3745) and whether or not they employ or engage independent contractors (relevant when applying obligations of the OHS Act). Adherence to this Practice Guideline has been developed by SCA (Vic) as an industry best practice.

The OC Act provides that the OC is obligated to manage, administer, repair and maintain the common property and services as well as carry out any other functions conferred on the OC by any other law.

The Occupational Health & Safety Act (OHS Act) incorporates a WorkSafe Vic Compliance Code which clarifies that employers need to ensure all workplaces under their management and control have an emergency management plan. The plan needs to be adequate to help employees deal with incidents or situations that create an emergency which could pose a threat to life, health or property. It needs to supplement action required under Victorian legislation, regulations and guidelines to prevent risks to life, health or property. It also references Australian Standard 3745.

Scope:

This guideline is applicable to all owners corporations with common property upon which employees/contractors conduct works; including residential, commercial, mixed use and industrial schemes.

Owners corporations are responsible for the evacuation and safety of employees and others from the common property. An owner and/or occupier is responsible for the evacuation and safety of employees and others from their private property.

In the case of a lot that is being used as a place of business, the person with effective control of that business has the same obligations set out in this guideline to their own employees and may choose to join or not join with the Owners Corporation emergency procedures.

Australian Standard (AS) 3745 has been developed to provide a uniform code for managing emergency procedures and evacuations in the workplace. Adherence to this standard is not compulsory, but is widely recognised as best practice and the benchmark for developing compliant and effective emergency management programs.

The Standard applies to buildings, structures or workplaces occupied by people, with the exception of Class 1a buildings as defined in the Building Code of Australia, unless that dwelling is also used as a workplace.

Best Practice:

SCA (Vic) recommends these processes be followed to manage and reduce risks to an owners corporation regarding their duty to employees, contractors and/or those using the common property of an OC as imposed by the Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004, and a common law duty of care.

The practical steps provided will assist an OC to provide a safe workplace by taking reasonable care to avoid a foreseeable risk of injury to both employees and independent contractors, as well as residents, as they exit the building in the event of an emergency.

This practice guideline outlines the 'considerations' to be given during each step of the planning for evacuations. It should be read and applied in line with procedures internal to your organisation, delegations under your Contract of Appointment and any other additional powers and functions delegated by each particular owners corporation.

Steps 1-14 as summarised below, are discussed in greater detail as part of the Procedure.

1. Create the understanding and importance to take action and plan for emergencies.
2. Request quotes for an Emergency Plan.
3. Present quotations to Committee or OC and select preferred consultant. Review the budget. (Ensure a provision to communicate and maintain the plan.)

4. Consultant to provide a report to Committee or OC.
5. OC to act on any immediate recommendations of the report and affix plan(s) as needed.
6. OC to determine how information is to be made available to all necessary parties (ie employees, contractors, residents, owners).
7. OC to provide evacuation plans to employees and/or independently engaged contractors of the OC.
8. OC to distribute information to all residents and owners.
9. OC to organise an annual Evacuation Drill.
10. OC and/or Committee to table report of outcomes from evacuation drill and act on any recommendations to improve process.
11. Appoint wardens and provide training to appointed wardens.
12. OHS to be tabled as topic at each committee meeting.
13. OC/OCM to report to Annual General Meeting.
14. Manage records.

Where an OC is obligated or chooses to incorporate the guidance offered by AS 3745 additional steps A - H should also be considered, summarised below and provided in more detail under 'Procedure'.

- A) Appoint and delegate powers to the Emergency Planning Committee (EPC)
- B) Clarify the level of indemnity provided to the EPC.
- C) EPC to work with contractor and OC/OCM to identify who is taking the varying positions.
- D) Provide training to wardens
- E) EPC share responsibility to distribute the plan / emergency responses.
- F) Professional consultant to facilitate drill.
- G) Professional consultant to produce compliance reports.
- H) EPC to determine review date.

Background:

An Owners Corporation is a creature of statute and must act in line with powers, functions and duties set out by its governing legislation. Primarily this includes the Owners Corporations Act 2006 and the Owners Corporations Regulations 2007.

S4
S5
S120-
S122 Under this legislation the functions of the Owners Corporation (Section 4(a)(b)(c)(f) & Section 5 in particular) and the function and duties of the owners corporation manager (Section 120 to 122) are outlined.

SCA
(Vic)
CoA These same functions and duties are also detailed within the standard SCA (Vic) Contract of Appointment signed by both parties in acknowledgement and agreement to comply.

With regard to Planning for Emergencies in particular, the Act governing an OC's obligations is the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act 2004 and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007.

PG
OHS
OC
OCM
Resp Refer to the SCA (Vic) Practice Guide Occupational Health & Safety - An OC & OCM's responsibility for a more detailed explanation of these additional obligations imposed when an OC becomes an 'employer' and or engages 'independent contractors'.

NB: Whilst nationally there is movement to adopt the Model Work Health and Safety Act, the new legislation is yet to be adopted here in Victoria.

WS Vic
OHS
Comp
FrameW
& HB To understand the framework of the OHS legislation, read 'WorkSafe Victoria – Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Compliance Framework and Handbook'. Available on the WorkSafe Victoria website www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/

PG –
OHS
Leg
Frame A brief overview of this framework is provided within the SCA (Vic) Guide to Understanding the OHS Legislative Framework.

WS Vic
Comp
Code
WorkP
Amen **WorkSafe Victoria Compliance Code – 'Workplace amenities and work environment':**

This publication emphasises the duty of an employer with regard to Emergency Planning - 'Responding to Emergencies' and recognises that all employees need to have access to, and training in a plan that clearly explains appropriate responses in case of an emergency, including the controlled movement of people from the workplace. It advises in practical terms how to comply with the obligated functions of the OC under the OHS Act, providing details of Emergency Management Plans.

Best practice recognises that access to the Compliance Codes is readily available, and that to follow the guidance within, the OC may be considered to meet the duties imposed by the legislation in a reasonably practicable way.

It is not expected that an OC or OCM would have the expertise or technical knowledge to implement all the requirements of the Code.

An OCM should raise the awareness of the OHS requirements and the OC's obligations to comply with these and to avoid the consequences of failing to manage these. **SCA (Vic) strongly recommends that an OC engage a professional consultant to ensure compliance and minimise liability in the unfortunate event of an incident occurring.**

The Compliance Code also identifies that compliance may also be achieved when adhering to the management process detailed in the Building Codes of Australia, 'Australian Standard 3745 – Planning for Emergencies. The details of this Standard are available and accessible via a professional consultant. Although, an overview of the additional steps that should be followed to comply with AS 3745 are included as a subset of the Procedure outlined below.

Complexes that may be exempt from complying are residential complexes where all occupants walk out their front door onto their own property, such as individual town houses with no shared points of exit from the building.

An OC must note that the legislative obligation to implement and train for an evacuation is imposed on the OC primarily towards any employees and/or contractors that the OC may independently engage. The members of the OC and residents of the complex are also users of the common property so they should also be included to ensure their safety as they move through and on common property.

Procedure:

1. Create the understanding and the importance to take action and to plan for emergencies. This can include distribution of the WorkSafe Victoria Compliance Code – Workplace amenities and work environment.
 - a. Explain to your OC the terms and understanding of the OHS legislation as noted above in 'background'. It is important that owners comprehend what is covered particularly that common area is defined under the OHS Act as a 'Workplace', 'employees' may be resident managers and/or independent contractors such as plumbers, electricians, caretakers etc.
 - b. In accordance with this Compliance Code "all employees need to have access to, and training in, a plan that clearly explains appropriate responses in case of an emergency, including the controlled movement of people from the workplace." Provide the OC with a list of OC employees and contractors.
 - c. Provide the OC with data to identify how many lots within the complex are owner/occupied, and how many are tenanted. The list could be provided per floor or quadrant of the OC.
2. Request quotes from professional consultant(s) to provide the Emergency Plan, including requirement to prepare diagrams, option to conduct emergency evacuation drills and other associated costs.

A professional consultant will take you through emergency identification and analysis (of potential emergency events and scenarios that might affect the people in the building and their inclusion in emergency plan).

You can refer to the [SCA \(Vic\) Associate Directory](#) on the website for consultants who perform this category of work.

3. Present quotations based on the advice from the professional consultant, to OC Committee or OC to consider so they can make an informed decision. Review the budget to ensure the OC has adequate resources to enable the development and implementation of the emergency plan. Funds are required to cover engagement of a consultant, production of plans and routine conduct of evacuation drills.

PG –
Cont.
&
Work
Orders

OC to select the preferred consultant after considering the quotes. The scope should be clear about what is required.

Refer to SCA (Vic) Practice Guideline – Contractors & Work Orders for more details on engaging contractors.

4. Provide a report which includes a recommended plan of action to comply with outcomes, to the OC Committee or OC for approval to proceed.
5. The OC should also be encouraged to accept the plan and to affix evacuation diagram to walls near paths of travel.
6. The OC should determine how the information is to be made available to all necessary parties (ie employees, contractors, residents, owners). The OC may wish to provide a hard copy or notify in writing, with direct links that it is available on a particular website. A copy may be included within all Owners Corporation Certificates, all owner welcome packs which they receive upon settlement, landlords to include in lease agreements, etc.
7. Evacuation plans must be provided to employees and/or independently engaged contractors who are to work on site; such as security firms, resident manager, caretakers, plumbers, electricians etc.

The OC should consider a process whereby the employee/contractor 'acknowledges receipt and/or access to these plans'. For example, OC / OCM should consider adding advice on Work Orders that an evacuation plan exists for this building, where it may be located on site, and/or that the employee/contractor should request a copy if they do not have access to it, also include advice that they should make themselves familiar with it. Alternatively, it could be provided each time an employee/contractor attends site, or once to employee and/or contractors employer as part of induction process, signatures witnessing access to information via a contractor log book, downloads from web, declaration when submits quote or invoice that he/she has read the plan.

8. Distribute information to all owners and residents. Request that landlords provide a copy of it to their real estate agents with the instruction to include a copy with their lease agreement highlighting the requirement to participate in emergency activities and review copy of the emergency plan.

9. Organise an Evacuation Drill.

An evacuation drill must be conducted annually within residential buildings and 6 monthly within commercial buildings (as a minimum).

9.1 Confirm date and time with the consultant to conduct the drill.

9.2 Notify in writing all employees and independent contractors engaged by the OC of the upcoming drill and their obligation to comply.

9.3 Notify all OC members and their tenants of the upcoming opportunity to participate in the drill and encourage their participation.

9.4 Drill to take place. OC/OCM to provide the consultant with a list of all those invited to participate; employees/contractors of the OC, residents, owners, other businesses etc.

Contractor will organise on-site activities, to isolate and de-isolate the Fire Indicator Panel prior to and after drill, announce the commencement of the drill and explain how it will work, manage the evacuation process, as well as provide feedback to residents after the drill and provide report back to OC & OCM.

10. OC and/or Committee to table report of outcomes and act on any recommendations to improve the process.

11. Appoint wardens and provide training to appointed wardens.

12. Place OHS as topic on each committee meeting agenda to discuss any particular items of concern, but once per year include review of plan as topic, even if it is to note the review is not taking place this year, or is to be deferred to a particular date.

An OC should be able to answer yes to the following regarding responding to emergencies:

- ✓ Is there a written emergency management plan with simple, clear and flexible procedures?
- ✓ Is the plan accessible to all employees and others? How?
- ✓ Are employees/contractors instructed and trained in the procedures?
- ✓ Are there appropriate emergency response features and equipment, including clearly marked exit routes and doors?

13. OC to report to AGM

13.1 that a plan is in place

13.2 where a copy of the plan may be obtained from if they don't have one

13.3 landlords should: include details with their lease agreements to encourage residents to familiarise themselves with their building's emergency plans, and

ensure real estate agents notify the OC and/or MFB of any mobility impaired tenants.

14. Management of records held by OCM office

Identify in what format the information is to be recorded and maintain a logical system eg soft/hard copies, file notes, work orders, software program etc. A standard process will ensure data is easy to locate and allow easy research of history at any particular point in time by any member of staff; ie if there is a claim that action failed to take place or was carried out inadequately and there is a subsequent problem or resulting incident etc.

Consideration to be given also for necessity to include the emergency plan, or reference to it, in:

- Owners Corporation Certificates (OCC)
- Welcome packs to new owners
- Annual General Meeting (Notice and Minutes). This will ensure all owners are aware that an emergency plan exists and gives the owners an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the evacuation procedure. Include a request that landlords make copies available to their tenants and/or contractors working on site and/or their real estate agents. Also the need to notify the OC and/or MFB of any mobility impaired tenants.
- OC insurers for their records.
- Regular newsletters to residents.
- Work Orders/agreements to and with all employees and/or independently engaged contractors.

BCA
AS3745
WS Vic
Comp
Code WP
Amen –
S150
Aust
Stand
Guide to
FrameW

Australian Standard 3745 – Planning for emergencies in facilities:

Section 150 of the above referenced Compliance Code advises that for further information, reference should be made to 'AS 3745 Emergency Control organisation and procedures for buildings, structures and workplaces'. As previously mentioned access to the details of this Code and relevance to a particular property may be sought from a professional consultant.

You can reference the SCA (Vic) Practice Guide – 'Australian Standard - A Guide to Understanding the Framework' for a better understanding of how these Standards fit into the legislative framework.

In principal, whilst AS 3745 is a voluntary standard, it applies to buildings, structures or workplaces occupied by people, with the exception of Class 1a buildings as defined in the Building Code of Australia, unless that dwelling is also used as a workplace.

The SCA (Vic) industry 'best practice' recommendation is to adhere to this Standard to the extent that may be seen as reasonably practicable.

AS 3745 has been developed to provide a uniform code for managing emergency procedures and evacuations in the workplace. Adherence to this standard is not compulsory, but is widely recognised as best practice and the benchmark for developing compliant and effective emergency management programs.

By adopting the standard and promoting compliance this will minimise the liability of the OC and OCM in the event of an incident. Note also the risk associated for an OC, is not always being advised if/when one or more residential lots are used by the occupier as a workplace. If a lot is being used as a workplace it is the owner/occupier responsibility to ensure OH&S compliance internal to the lot. It is recommended that this is added to the Welcome letter and owners reminded at each AGM.

Looking closely at AS 3745 it is noted that definitions are provided within for many terms. Noted below are a select few to highlight the Standards relevance:

Facility: A building, structure or workplace that is, or may be, occupied by people (occupants).

Occupant: A person attending a facility on a permanent or temporary basis, such as an employee, contractor, student or resident, but not a visitor.

Workplace: Any place where work is, or is to be, performed by-

- a) a person engaged for work for gain or reward, or on a voluntary basis;
- b) a person conducting a business or undertaking; or
- c) as defined by the relevant Commonwealth, State and Territory occupational health and safety statutes for the definition of 'workplace'.

Class 1a buildings: A single dwelling being –

- a) a detached house; or
- b) one of a group of two or more attached dwellings, each being a building, separated by a fire –resistant wall, including a row house, terrace house, town house or villa unit

ECO: Emergency Control Organisation. A person or persons appointed by the emergency planning committee to direct and control the implementation of the facility's emergency response procedures.

EPC: Emergency Planning Committee. Persons responsible for the documentation and maintenance of an emergency plan.

Procedure:

In order for an OC is to comply with AS 3745 the following additional procedures should be added to the process outlined in the aforementioned 'Procedure' consisting of steps 1-14:

- A) Appoint an Emergency Planning Committee (EPC) and delegate powers to EPC.
- If the rules of the OC allow the appointment of subcommittee's, then appoint a subcommittee at the Annual General Meeting, delegate the powers and functions. Be sure to include delegations within a resolution and any instrument of delegation used.
 - If the rules of the OC do not provide for the appointment of subcommittees, then form a working group to meet and provide recommendations to the OC Committee on the functions and obligations.
- B) Advise the EPC on the level of indemnity provided to them under the policy of the OC.
- Seek this detail from the OC's insurer directly. Cover may be extended within the Office Bearers Liability as they act in their position as Committee Members. Alternatively cover may be extended to the OC as the legal entity; noting that Section 118 of the OC Act offers immunity to committee and subcommittee members as the individuals and attaches instead to the OC.
- C) The EPC should work with the contractor and OC/OC Committee to identify who is taking the varying positions and develop plans.
- OCM and EPC to identify if any mobility impaired occupants (to the best of their ability). Incorporate the specific needs of some occupants into the plan. It is recommended that this responsibility be confirmed and passed back to the owner within the content of the Welcome letter and at each AGM.
 - Refer sample 'emergency evacuation plan' (Annexure A, courtesy of *LinkFire*).
- D) Wardens to undergo training as deemed necessary by the Professional Consultant.
- E) EPC shares responsibility to distribute the plan / emergency responses or sections as appropriate, in a format that can be comprehended by the recipient, including –
- Emergency Control Organisation (ECO) need the plan and sufficient information so they can carry out their duties
 - Occupants need to receive a copy of the plan and sufficient information of the emergency response procedures to explain the actions they are to take with regard to an emergency.

- F) Professional Consultant to facilitate drill, with support of the EPC.
 - Wardens to be present at drills and contractor debrief afterwards.
- G) Professional Consultant to produce compliance report, including outcome of drill and provide to EPC and maintain register of positions.
- H) The EPC to share responsibility to confirm review date; plan annually to determine if updates needed; ie where a change has been made to the exits to the building.

Issues:

Issues can arise when an OC fails to recognise its obligations under the OHS Act. If an OC is taking this line of thinking, it is in the OCM's best interest to seek professional consultants support to deliver the message. Decisions of the OC and OC Committee should be minuted noting that the OC is failing to act on the advice of the OCM.

A professional manager should also consider the risk of managing a non-compliant building and consider their options to minimise their risk exposure.

Issues can arise when residents fail to participate in the evacuation drills. The outcomes of all drills are recorded. It is in the best interest of the OC, OC Committee and OCM to try new ways of engaging with residents and creating their awareness of the plans in place, as well as maintaining well documented records of all attempts to notify parties (residents, owners, contractors, employees) and invite their participation in the drill.

Another issue which an OC may need to consider is, if complying with the minimum compliance required under the OH&S Act is sufficient, and the benefit of extending their process to incorporate the guidance available within AS 3745.

Resources:

- Owners Corporations Act 2006 Sections (OC)
- Owners Corporations Regulations 2007 (OC Regs)
- Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004 (OHS)
- Occupational Health & Safety Regulations 2007 (OHS Regs)
- SCA (Vic) Contract of Appointment (CoA)
- SCA (Vic) Practice Guideline – Occupational Health & Safety
- SCA (Vic) Practice Guide to Understanding the OHS Legislative Framework
- SCA (Vic) Practice Guide Australian Standards – A Guide to Understanding Framework
- WorkSafe Victoria Compliance Code – Workplace amenities and work environment
- WorkSafe Victoria – Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Compliance Framework and Handbook
- Standards Australia FAQ's <http://www.standards.org.au/Pages/FAQ.aspx>
- Australian Standard Planning for emergencies in facilities AS 3745

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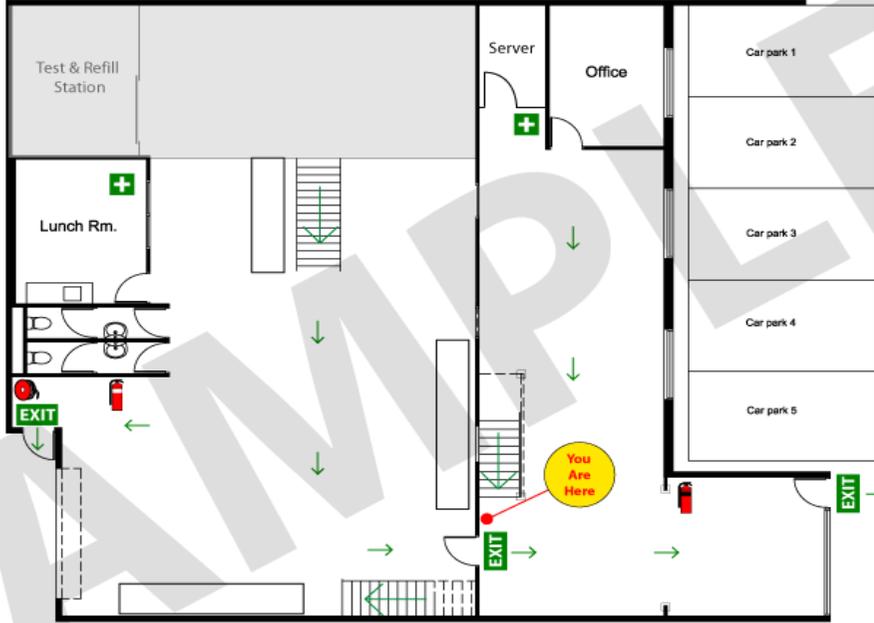
Annexure A



1300 669 439
www.linkfire.com.au

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN
Link Fire
21/11 Havelock Rd, Bayswater
Ground Floor





000
EMERGENCY
In a life threatening emergency dial 000

IN CASE OF FIRE

REMOVE PEOPLE
• from immediate danger

ALERT THE FIRE SERVICE
• call 000

CONFINE FIRE & SMOKE
• close doors and windows (if safe to do so)

EVACUATE
• to the **ASSEMBLY AREA**

↓

Havelock Rd

AA

EVACUATION PROCEDURE

STAGE 1:- Removal of people from the Immediate Danger Area
Occupants and staff in the immediate danger area are to assemble a safe distance away from the fire and smoke. When the area has been evacuated all doors and windows should be closed to contain fire.

STAGE 2:- Complete Evacuation of Entire Building
Should the emergency necessitate evacuation of the whole building, the Manager or the Fire Service will direct occupants from the safe place to the **ASSEMBLY AREA**.

STAGE 3:- Assembly Area
Your **ASSEMBLY AREA** is located (AA)

STAGE 4:- Roll Call.
To be conducted as soon as possible and to ensure all Persons are accounted for. Report all missing persons to **FIRE OFFICERS**.

 Mobility impaired persons should evacuate immediately assisted by a nominated person.

EXTINGUISHER GUIDE

P - Pull the pin - break seal and test extinguisher
A - Aim at base of fire - ensure you have means of escape
S - Squeeze the operating handle - to discharge the agent
S - Sweep from side to side - completely extinguish fire

Legend

AA - ASSEMBLY AREA	 - FIRE BLANKET	 - HYDRANT
 - EXIT PATH	 - DCP EXTINGUISHER	 - HOSE REEL
EXIT - EXIT	 - CO2 EXTINGUISHER	FIP - FIRE INDICATOR PANEL
+ - FIRST AID KIT	 - WATER EXTINGUISHER	 - BREAK GLASS ALARM