



**Title:**  
**EMERGENCY SAFETY RESPONSE POLICY**

<b>Subject:</b> <b>EMERGENCY &amp; SAFETY</b>	<b>Page:</b> 1 of 9	<b>Policy Number:</b> 01.10.00
<b>Category:</b> <b>DISTRICTWIDE POLICY</b>	<b>Approval Date:</b> 07/16/2014	<b>Last Revised Date:</b> 06/13/2018

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

It is the policy of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (*the "District"*) to help reduce risks arising from possible emergency events. This policy contains quick reference information and check list procedures on how to report an emergency; what to do; and, who will assist in the case of an emergency.

Emergencies and disasters are unpredictable and strike without warning. Failure to heed emergency preparations in advance could result in death, injury and potential loss or damage to facilities, property, and equipment. In the interest of safety, it is important for all District employees to review this policy and be familiar with emergency safety procedures.

The District does acknowledge that despite guidelines found in this document it cannot eliminate all risks arising from all emergency events. The District will endeavour to give information and training as often as is necessary to employees (*and other persons, such as volunteers*) to enable a better understanding of these matters.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to provide District employees with guidelines regarding actions they might take during the initial stages of an emergency event, and prior to the arrival of emergency service personnel. The primary goal of this guideline is to reduce the likelihood of an employee suffering injury or harm during an emergency event by preparing employees to deal with various types of emergency events.

**AFFECTED AREAS:**

An emergency event can occur at any time, and for this reason, the District has adopted a policy requiring all employees to become familiar with actions they might take during the initial stages of an emergency event in order to reduce the likelihood of harm to themselves and others.

The policies outlined in these guidelines apply only to District employees who are actually engaged in their assigned duties and actually present at their place of employment or another District property. District employees are herewith advised they are neither expected nor required to expose themselves to an elevated level of risk in order to conform with policies or procedures outlined in this policy.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Emergency:** A sudden and unexpected situation that may pose an immediate risk to health, life, property or environment and possibly disrupt or interfere with District operations and activities.

**Emergency Event:** An expected or unexpected situation which has occurred or is occurring that requires immediate attention or remedial action to prevent or mitigate harm to health, life, property or environment.

**Immediate Emergency Response:** All predetermined actions taken by District employees during the initial stage of an emergency event.

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**PROCEDURE/PROCESS:**

**1) Emergency Safety Procedures:**

**a. In the event an accident occurs, District employees should:**

- Know the location of the two nearest exits and have a plan in mind on how to evacuate in the event of an emergency.
- Talk to each other – prior conversations about what could happen and how to respond will help everyone be prepared if an emergency occurs.

**b. If you are in charge of an area and an emergency event occurs, you should:**

- Have a plan to disseminate to others regarding who, what, when, where, how, etc.
- Be prepared to delegate duties.
- Do not let yourself or others take foolish chances.
- Help those you can without incurring additional risk.
- Follow instructions exactly when and as they are relayed.
- Control the flow of information by using plain and simple language during a crisis.
- Clearly communicate your needs - and trust others to do their part.
- Stay calm – recognize others will respond as you do.
- Set the example - do not make the situation worse.
- Remember - everyone will be under stress so keep things simple and straightforward and it will help make the information easier to understand.
- Be prepared to deal with human nature. Stress, fear, fatigue, and anger will be present in those around you. Do not become frustrated.

**Note:** User Departments have been issued weather alert radios and/or other technological communication devices. User Departments are responsible for ensuring:

- That the technology devices distributed to them are operational, and in good working order;
- That these technological devices are distributed to their various locations and/or employees (including field employees); and,
- District employee should know that such devices can and should be used in the event of an emergency situation.

**c. Calling 911:**

- For all emergencies, District employees should seek assistance promptly.
- **Dialing 911** will connect the caller with the closest police dispatch center.
- Summoning emergency service providers to the scene is normally a vital first step.
- Be prepared to tell the **911** call-taker your location and the precise nature of the emergency event which is occurring (*e.g., fire, injured or ill person, etc.*).
- Stay calm, stay on the line, and answer all questions posed by the **911** call-taker.
- In most cases, your call will be transferred to the Cook County Sheriff's Emergency Communication Center so emergency service providers can be dispatched to the scene.
- Request the nearest officer(s) be dispatched to the location of the emergency event.
- Always advise the **911** call-taker when the event is actually occurring on District property so that District police personnel may also be dispatched to the scene.
- Call **708-771-1001** if a District police officer has not responded to the scene prior to the departure of other emergency service providers from the scene (*e.g., ambulance, fire, and local police*).

**d. Injury and Medical Emergencies:**

- **Call 911** and tell the call-taker you are requesting assistance for a medical emergency and briefly describe the nature of the medical emergency.
- Request an ambulance and precisely describe the location where the ambulance should respond.
- Remain on the line and provide the call-taker with detailed information about the type of injury or medical emergency.
- The **911** call-taker may provide helpful advice and guidance regarding first aid. Be prepared to either follow the instructions or relay them to another person present at the scene.
- Stay on the line, or give a call-back number if calling from a mobile telephone.
- Remain at the scene and provide detailed information to the District police officer, including the identity of possible witnesses, so that an Incident Report can be prepared.
- **Call 708-771-1001** if a District police officer has not arrived before the ambulance leaves the scene.
- Do not attempt to move a person who has fallen.
- Keep the victim warm and comfortable.
- Comfort the victim and reassure them that medical assistance is on the way.
- Position an employee to direct emergency responders to victim location.
- Be aware of hazards associated with Bloodborne Pathogens.
- Do not come into contact with bodily fluids.
- If you are stuck by a needle or other sharp object or get blood or other potentially infectious materials in your eyes, nose, mouth, or on broken skin, immediately flood the exposed area with water and clean any wound with soap and water or a skin disinfectant if available. Report this immediately to a supervisor and seek immediate medical attention.
- After victim's immediate needs have been taken care of, remain at the scene to assist emergency responder services with pertinent information about the incident.
- Notify victim's supervisor or emergency contact.

**Note:** In the case of an emergency, District employees that have been certified in First Aid/AED/CPR may assist Emergency Responders before they have arrived at the District location if and/or where appropriate/requested, and safe to do so.

**e. Fire/Visible Smoke/Carbon Monoxide:**

- Employees should always become familiar with the location of the two nearest exits in any District building to which they may be assigned so they can quickly exit the building and/or guide visitors to the nearest exit if a fire or carbon monoxide related emergency occurs.
- If the building fire alarm, or carbon monoxide alarm, sounds or someone informs you of a fire or smoke walk to the nearest exit.
- Take all fire and carbon monoxide alarms seriously and leave the building immediately. Do not stop.
- If you discover a fire or smoke but no alarm has sounded, walk to the nearest exit and if you are able, pull the closest fire alarm.
- As you exit, alert other employees and visitors and direct them to the nearest exit. **Call 911** as soon as you have safely exited the building.
- Never attempt to put the fire out unless properly trained!

*While exiting the building during a fire, follow the below listed guidelines:*

- Always use the stairs, never use an elevator.
- If you encounter smoke, drop to hands and knees and crawl towards the nearest exit. Stay low where the air is cleaner and cooler. Hold your breath as much as possible and breathe through a shirt, towel or handkerchief to filter the air.

- Leave all possessions (*laptop, computers, bags, etc...*). Safe exit from the building is your primary goal.
- Before opening any door, touch the door panel with the back of your hand and do not open if it is hot. If it is hot, try to find another exit.
- Alert other people (*if you are able*) and direct them to the nearest exit. If you are able, assist people with special needs (*see below*).
- Close doors behind you as you exit to help stop the spread of fire.
- If fire prevents you from exiting the building, close as many doors as possible between you and the fire.
- Wet and place cloth material around/under the doors to prevent smoke from entering the room and signal for help if possible.
- If your clothes are on fire – stop, drop and roll.
- Once you exit the building, do not go back in!

After exiting the building during a fire, follow the below listed guidelines:

- Assemble in a designated location with other employees/visitors away from the building. Take account for who is present, and those still in the building, and inform law enforcement.
- Notify emergency personnel if you know or suspect someone is trapped or still inside the building.
- Do not attempt to re-enter the building until authorized to do so by the emergency responders.

Evacuation of Individuals with Disabilities During a Fire

- Employees should be alert for persons with physical disabilities who may require assistance to exit the building. District employees will be guided by the following:
  - a) **Persons with a disability who are ambulatory** (*e.g., blind, deaf, using a walker*) might be exposed to an elevated risk during a rapid building evacuation or otherwise impede an evacuation. In such cases, employees will guide the individual to a stairwell and assist them in evacuating once a clear passage has been established.
  - b) **Persons with a disability who are non-ambulatory** (*e.g., persons in a wheelchair*) will be moved to an appropriate refuge area near a stairwell and await assistance if there is no immediate danger. If the hazard becomes life threatening, move the individual to a room, close the door, notify emergency responders of the precise location of the non-ambulatory individual, and request assistance.

**f. Severe Weather and Tornado Alerts:**

- District employees should monitor weather conditions. The National Weather Service issues alerts to the public through various media when severe weather is imminent.
- If you hear a warning or observe threatening skies, make the safe decision and quickly get to a place of safety quickly.
- District employees should become aware where safety/refuge spots can be found in every District property for both their own safety and the safety of any visitors who may be present.
- The National Weather Service (*NWS*) warns:
  1. When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!
  2. Fully enclosed buildings with wiring and plumbing provide the best protection from lightning while sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do not.
  3. If a sturdy building is not nearby, get into a hard-topped metal vehicle and close all the windows.

4. Stay inside until 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder, or upon direction from emergency safety responders.
5. If outside, take shelter in the nearest building or a ditch/depression.
6. Once the storm has passed, report any physical injuries by **calling 911**.
7. Make sure to **tell 911** call-taker if the injury or damage involved District employees, visitors, or property.
8. District can be directly contacted 24 hours a day by calling District Police Communications Desk at **708-771-1001**.

**g. Flash Floods:**

Before A Flood

- If flash floods have previously occurred in the region, then determine the precise location of impacted areas and prepare an evacuation plan with one or more safe evacuation routes.
- If advised to evacuate, do so immediately and advise others of your planned evacuation route.
- If there is credible evidence a flash flood is either occurring or imminent, move immediately to higher ground.

During A Flood

- Do not walk through moving water. As little as 6 inches of moving water can make you fall.
- If you have to walk in water, wherever possible, walk where the water is not moving and use a stick to determine the depth of the water and firmness of the ground in front of you.
- Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your vehicle, abandon the vehicle and move to higher ground if you can do so safely.

After A Flood

- Listen for news reports to learn whether it is safe to travel in the area. Avoid moving water and flooded roads.
- Be aware - even after floodwaters have receded, roads may have been weakened and could collapse under the weight of a vehicle.
- Stay away from downed power lines, and report them to the power company.
- Stay out of any building if it is surrounded by floodwaters.
- Be aware floodwaters may be contaminated by oil, gasoline, or raw sewage.
- Water may also be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.

**h. Workplace Violence:**

- The District policy regarding incidents of workplace violence is found in the “*Workplace Violence Policy*”.

**i. Civil Disturbance**

- The District policy regarding incidents of civil disturbance is found in the “*Pickets, Protests, and Demonstrations Policy*”.

**j. Utility /Power Failures:**

- Remain calm.
- In the event of a utility failure (*electrical, water, gas, or telephone*), contact Facilities Management at **708-450-1072**. If the outage occurs after normal duty hours (*between 1500 and 0700*) or on a holiday or weekend, then contact the Manager on Call at **708-681-0707**.

- Supervisors may contact ComEd about the issue if they have been given prior authority to do so by the Facilities Department, or a Department Head, should a utility/power failure ever occur.
- Provide as much information as possible, including the nature and scope of the outage and the extent to which District operations or services have been or will be disrupted.
- Unless advised to leave the impacted facility, be prepared to have one or more staff members remain present at the facility.
- Be prepared to identify employee(s) designated to remain at the facility and be prepared to provide a telephone number so access to the property can be arranged and ongoing communications maintained.
- If any previously scheduled events at the facility will not be possible, ensure timely notification is made to other District departments so invited guests or the public can be alerted.
- Turn off equipment such as computers and monitors to avoid potential serious damage once the power is restored.
- If you are in a dark area, proceed cautiously to an area that has emergency light.
- If you are in an elevator, stay calm. Use the elevator emergency alarm button to alert Security.

k. **Hazardous Materials:**

All District properties must ensure that Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) (*formerly MSDSs or Material Safety Data Sheets*) are readily accessible to employees for all hazardous chemicals in their workplace. This may be done in many ways. For example, SDS's may be stored or used in a binder or on computers as long as employees have immediate access to the information without leaving their work area when needed and a back-up is available for rapid access to the SDS in the case of a power outage or other emergency. District properties must also ensure that all containers with hazardous materials are properly labelled and stored in a safe and secure environment.

- Employees should make themselves aware of any hazardous materials in their workplace, know their designated storage location, and be familiar with the potential risk from exposure.
- ALL spills/exposures should be immediately reported to **911** so emergency responders can respond to the scene to evaluate and mitigate the hazardous material release or spill.
- The employee **calling 911** should be prepared to report the following information:
  1. Location and type of spill
  2. Injuries
  3. Number of people injured or exposed
  4. Approximate amount of material involved
  5. Identifiable chemical reactions
- **Evacuating the area is the first duty of every employee.** All employees and visitors should proceed to the nearest exit, closing all doors to contain the spread.
- After exiting the building, ALL persons should move to an area of safety well away and upwind from the area of release or spill.
- No person should re-enter the evacuated area until authorized to do so by emergency responders.
- All evacuated persons should remain a safe distance from the scene and await the arrival of emergency responders who will assist in decontamination and provide treatment to any person who was injured or exposed.
- Notify your immediate supervisor and summon District police to the scene by calling **708-771-1001**.
- Employees located at the 69 W. Washington location are to contact the Office of Building Security at (312) 603-0404.

**l. Explosive Devices/Bomb Threats:**

- Most threats are received by telephone. The first thing an employee must remember is to remain calm and not get others excited.
- The employee receiving the call should listen carefully and document as many details about the call and caller as possible, such as:
  1. Precise time of the call received and terminated.
  2. If caller number is displayed, record the number.
  3. Exact words of the caller – noting any unusual expressions or phrases.
  4. Record any information about location or time bomb set to detonate.
  5. Description of caller, such as gender and age.
  6. Whether caller had any discernible accent.
- Employees should ask the caller to repeat information. The employee should ask:
  1. Where is the bomb (room, floor, location)?
  2. When will it explode?
  3. What does the bomb look like?
  4. What kind of bomb is it?
  5. Did you place the bomb?
  6. Why?
  7. Are you an employee?
  8. Where are you calling from?
- After the caller disconnects, immediately notify immediate supervisor and **911**. Provide as much information as possible.
- Immediately examine your area for any unusual or unfamiliar items or packages. If any are found, **DO NOT** handle, touch or move.
- Move to a safe location as soon as possible and wait for emergency response personnel. The decision to evacuate will be made by the highest ranking employee present at the scene.

**m. Biological Threats/Suspicious Materials:**

- Employees, who come in contact with a package suspected of containing a harmful biological agent, should not shake, move or empty the package.
- The package should be disturbed as little as possible, left in a safe location, and the area evacuated.
- If it is a powdery substance ventilation needs to immediately shut down, if possible.
- **911 should be contacted** as soon as practical and a request made for emergency responders capable of handling a biological threat.
- No person should be allowed to re-enter the room or building where the suspect package was left.
- Anyone exposed to the suspect package should remain isolated from all other persons and await the arrival of emergency responders.
- When in a safe area, remove any contaminated clothing and wash hands.
- Inform immediate supervisors.

**RESPONSIBILITY:**

- 1) **District Employees:** District employees are responsible for: **(1)** familiarizing themselves with the policies and procedures outlined in this directive; **(2)** completing any emergency management training course(s) which may be prescribed by District management; **(3)** being aware of any threats, physical or verbal, and/or any disruptive behavior of any individual and report such to supervisors; **(4)** being familiar with local procedures for dealing with workplace threats and emergencies; **(5)** not confronting individuals who are a threat; and, **(6)** taking all threats seriously.

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- 2) **The Human Resources Department:** The Department of Human Resources shall be responsible for developing and presenting emergency management training courses to District employees; scheduling routine training sessions, and maintaining official attendance records to document completion of all such training by District employees.
- 3) **Landscape Maintenance Department:** The Landscape Maintenance Department shall collaborate with the Law Enforcement Department and the Cook County Department of Homeland Security Emergency Management (“DHSEM”) to promote county-wide, joint emergency management preparedness and response to large scale disasters; and support the response to all emergency events occurring on District properties.
- 4) **Law Enforcement Department:** The Law Enforcement Department shall be responsible for: (1) responding to all emergency events occurring on District properties, to assist with the delivery of emergency services, conduct investigations, and make timely notifications to senior police management and other appropriate District managers; (2) serving as the official District liaison with the DHSEM on emergency, inclement weather, and District closure related projects, initiatives, and other related activities; and, (3) contributing to the development of District emergency management policies and procedures.
- 5) **Office of the General Superintendent:** The Office of the General Superintendent shall be responsible for: (1) declaring District emergencies and/or closures; (2) communicating and updating the and District employees via the District website, social media accounts, and/or other media outlets, District related closures; (3) working with the President’s Office, and other partner organizations, to ensure that the District maintain a safe and secure operation; and, (4) developing policies and procedures to ensure departmental compliance with this policy.
- 6) **Resource Management Department:** The Resource Management Department shall collaborate with the Law Enforcement Department and the DHSEM to promote county-wide, joint emergency management preparedness and response to large scale disasters; and support the response to all emergency events occurring on District properties.

**TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:**

- 1) All District employees should be trained on this policy.

**COMMUNICATION PLAN:**

- 1) This policy should be distributed to all staff.
- 2) This policy should be added to the District shared drive, intranet, and website.
- 3) Department Heads should work to ensure that their staff are knowledgeable about this policy.

**REFERENCES:**

Several credible and reliable reference sources were used during the preparation of this written directive, including, but not limited to, National Weather Service, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Illinois Emergency Management Agency, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.



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**APPROVAL:** Arnold Randall  
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**If you have questions, comments, or suggestions concerning District policies, please contact:**

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