

RISK Alert

ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS FOR BOND POLICYHOLDERS.



Alert Type

Awareness

Watch

Warning

Evacuation Plans: A Safe Alternative

If local officials suddenly issued an evacuation order for your area, would you be ready? Having detailed evacuation plans for all your branch locations can allow for staff, members, and other visitors to exit in the most efficient and safest manner. Of course, the cause of the evacuation will play a significant role in how the evacuation takes place and the specific route taken.

Causes can run the gamut from weather emergencies to security threats and workplace violence. Wildfires are disasters that can spread quickly - particularly during dry conditions – and impact credit union property and people safety rapidly.

Details

Evacuations are more common than many people realize. Wildfires and floods cause evacuations most frequently across the U.S., and almost every year, community residents are forced to evacuate because of emergencies.

Preparing plans can help your employees get to safety before a wildfire impacts an area and can also help protect personal property. In addition, an evacuation plan can help minimize confusion and injuries during these stressful times.

A thorough evacuation plan should include:

- The possible conditions that will activate the plan
- A clear chain of command indicating who is responsible for assessing the situation and determining if an evacuation is necessary, who will notify other areas of the building (in case the event is not immediate apparent to the entire location), and who will notify first responders.
- Emergency functions and who will perform them
- Specific evacuation procedures, including traditional building exits and alternate routes out of your area
- Procedures for accounting for personnel, members, and visitors
- Equipment for personnel for remote work necessary for critical work functions

In addition, many organizations that are in wildfire zones try to employ a 30-foot safety zone surrounding buildings by removing combustible materials and reducing the volume of vegetation to a minimum. Clear branches and shrubs that are within 15 feet of chimneys or stovepipes and remove vines from the walls of buildings.

Frequently mowing grass and replacing vegetation with less flammable species can also provide better protection against spreading wildfires.

Credit unions that lease space need to ensure their tenants are also aware of any emergency / evacuation plans and protocols. Of course, if an evacuation is ordered, you should always check with the credit union chain of command and local officials before returning.

Date: May 10, 2022

Risk Category: Disaster Planning; Employee Safety; Wellness

States: All

Share with:

- Branch Operations
- Board of Directors
- Executive Management
- Human Resources
- People Leaders
- Risk Manager



Facing risk challenges?

[Schedule](#) a free personalized discussion with a Risk Consultant to learn more about managing risk.

Evacuation Plans: A Safe Alternative

Risk Mitigation

Consider these precautions to keep personnel, members, and visitors safe:

- Ensure that all employees know what to do in case of an emergency. Review and practice evacuation plans on a regular basis. Update plans and procedures based on lessons learned from exercises.

Before

- Have enough supplies for your credit union including food and first aid kit. If available, store an N95 mask to protect yourself from smoke inhalation.
- Keep phones charged and purchase backup charging devices to power electronics
- Ensure any uninterruptible power supply is operational

During

- Monitor emergency alerts and notifications for information and instructions. Evacuate immediately if authorities tell you to do so.
- Shelter where it is safe and more comfortable. Check with local authorities for the latest information about public shelters or check open locations on the FEMA app.
- If trapped, call 9-1-1 and give your location, but be aware that emergency response could be delayed or unable to get to you.
- Use an N95 mask to protect yourself from smoke inhalation or limit your exposure to smoke by doing the following:
 - Choose a room to close off from the outside and set up a portable air cleaner or filter to keep the air in the room clean even when it is smokey in the rest of the building or outside.
 - Use high efficiency filters in your air conditioning system to capture fine particles from smoke. If your system has fresh air intake, set the system to “recirculate” mode and close the intake damper.
 - If you are ordered to evacuate but smokey conditions exist, stay inside in a safe location, or go to a community building where smoke levels are lower.
 - If you are sick and need medical attention, call 9-1-1 and/or your healthcare provider for further care instructions.

Evacuation

- Leave as early as possible. Do not linger once evacuation orders have been given. Promptly leaving clears roads for firefighters to get equipment in place to fight the fire and helps ensure residents’ safety. Be aware of your evacuation routes. Follow instructions, recommendations, and safety measures from local authorities.

Return-to-Home/Work

- Do not return home or to work until authorities say it is safe to do so.
- Avoid hot ash, charred trees, smoldering debris, and live embers. The ground may contain heat pockets that can burn you or spark another fire.
- Wear protective clothing – including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, work gloves and sturdy thick-soled shoes - during clean-up efforts. Use a respirator to limit exposure, and wet debris to minimize breathing dust particles. People with asthma, COPD, and/or other lung conditions should take precautions in areas with poor air quality, as it can worsen symptoms.
- Document property damage with photographs. Conduct an inventory and contact your insurance company for assistance.



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