



**DENVER**  
THE MILE HIGH CITY

**CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER**

Department of Safety  
Fire Department  
Fire Prevention Division

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TO: Residential Low-Rise Property Managers  
RE: Evacuation Requirements

The purpose of this correspondence is to outline the requirements for evacuation drills as dictated by the 2016 Denver Fire Code—the code currently in effect. The 2016 Denver Fire Code (DFC) is a combination of the 2015 International Fire Code and the 2016 Denver Amendments to the 2015 Edition of the International Fire Code.

It is essential that co-op, apartment and condominium boards, or management companies have an emergency plan in place for situations like fires, tornados, medical emergencies, power outages or active shooters. Although good planning is a major factor in keeping residents safe, safety systems—including fire separation construction, fire sprinklers, fire alarm and detection, emergency egress lighting, and exit signs—also play a key role in emergencies. To that purpose the Denver Fire Department has the practical mission of developing regulatory and policy guidelines and action strategies as well as educating stakeholders and disseminating public communications regarding fires and other emergencies, their danger, and emergency evacuation options.

This letter provides a brief outline for developing the most appropriate fire emergency procedures for residential buildings. Danger can strike at any moment and if you are in a residential building, whether it is low-rise or high-rise, it is critical to know how to evacuate in the event of an emergency. Being trained in the appropriate procedure for evacuating a building is the best way for a resident to ensure the safety of family, loved ones and fellow residents.

### ***Frequency***

Low Rise Residential occupancies are required to perform one fire safety training and one evacuation drill annually

### ***Performing Your Drill \****

First and foremost, the purpose of the emergency evacuation drill is to simulate the unpredictable nature of an emergency. As such, per Section 405.4 of the Denver Fire Code, all drills shall be held at unexpected times and under varying conditions to simulate the unusual conditions associated with fire. Therefore, residents should not receive any warning of a date/time of a drill. Another reason that tenants shouldn't receive advanced warning is that a true emergency could happen before or after the "appointed" time and someone may decide not to evacuate because they erroneously believe it is a drill.

Per Section 405.7 of the DFC, these drills must be initiated by the building's fire alarm system (if you have one). This can be accomplished by activating pull stations, smoke/heat detectors or utilizing a "drill" function on the alarm panel.

\* A full tutorial on how to perform a fire drill is available upon request at [dfdresidential@denvergov.org](mailto:dfdresidential@denvergov.org).

Fire trucks are NOT to respond to fire drills: they need to remain in service for true emergency calls. Prior to beginning your drill, please contact your monitoring agency and ask that you be taken "Offline" while you perform an emergency evacuation drill. This will ensure that the fire department doesn't respond using lights and siren to your building. Once all of the occupants have evacuated the building, you can reset your fire alarm panel and allow everyone to return to the building. Once you've ensured that your panel is reset, call your monitoring agency and put yourself "Back Online." This will let your monitoring agency know that any alarms coming from your property will require a fire department response.

### ***Documentation***

All evacuation drill training must be documented. In the event that an alternative is used, documentation should be kept on file of how the training was administered along with proof that all residents received the training. These records should be kept on site for 3 years.

For actual fire drills, the following documentation must be kept:

- Identity of person conducting the drill.
- Date and time of the drill.
- Notification method used.
- Staff members on duty and participating.
- Number of occupants evacuated.
- Special conditions simulated.
- Problems encountered.
- Weather conditions when occupants were evacuated.
- Time required to accomplish complete evacuation.

### ***Who Participates***

Pursuant to Sections 405.1 and 405.10, any time the building performs an actual evacuation, **ALL OCCUPANTS MUST PARTICIPATE IN EVACUATION DRILLS. FAILURE TO PARTICIPATE IN AN EVACUATION DRILL CONSTITUTES VIOLATION OF THE DENVER CITY ORDINANCES, THE DENVER FIRE CODE AND MAY RESULT IN LEGAL CONSEQUENCES INCLUDING FINES, PROBATION, COMMUNITY SERVICE OR INCARCERATION.**

### ***Occupants with a Disability or other Functional Access Need***

A list of all occupants who cannot evacuate for any reason shall be located near or inside the fire alarm panel in a conspicuous location. It is extremely important that occupants know to contact building management if they become mobility-impaired, even temporarily. This will allow the management company to keep its list of occupants requiring assistance current.

During an emergency evacuation drill, occupants with a disability should follow the building's Emergency Action Plan and report to their designated Area of Refuge (usually an enclosed stairwell) to await assistance. It is always best to have a "Buddy" stay with them in case they have a medical emergency during the alarm. If they cannot get out of their unit for any reason, stay inside, close doors and windows, block any cracks where smoke can come in. Call 911 if they are in immediate danger. If not, remain where they are until after the drill is over.

### ***Building Exemptions from Fire Evacuation Drills***

The only buildings exempt from performing the annual fire evacuation drills are those that have received approval from the Denver Fire Department Division Chief to be “protect-in-place” occupancies.

Where the protect-in-place strategy is adopted, the occupants of the floor of fire origin are immediately instructed to evacuate if possible while the occupants of other floor levels remain in their rooms and initiate a strategy of self-protection against the fire hazard until it is safe to evacuate or be rescued. **Please keep in mind that only the Denver Fire Prevention Division can grant approval for a building to employ “protect-in-place.”** Documented proof of approval must be presented by building management and notification must be posted in the fire command center.

Approvals for protect-in-place are rare and follow a comprehensive analysis of the building construction and safety systems by an engineer, another review by Denver Fire Engineers, plus looking at the resident profile.

Generally it is safer for occupants to be outside a building during an emergency rather than inside. Modern high-rise buildings are constructed with non-combustible materials and provide a relatively high level of fire safety. However, severe and prolonged fire conditions and other unusual factors may disable some of the fire safety features in the building. In addition, some older high-rise buildings may contain combustible constructible construction and others may not be equipped with modern fire safety systems.

Therefore, residents who remain in their living unit for a long period during an emergency may be at a higher risk. In addition, Denver Fire Department firefighters may have difficulty carrying out both fire suppression activities and rescue to a large number of occupants if resources are limited.

Information on registering your cell phone with Denver 911 Dispatch is on the next page.

# DENVER 911 SERVICES FOR CELL PHONES

The non-emergency dispatch number is:

**(720) 913-2400 Fire**

**(720) 913-2000 Police**

- **SMART911 Register your cell phone.**
  - This is a private, secure service that allows you to create a safety profile that provides 911 and emergency responders with important information you want them to know about yourself, your family members and pets, your home, and your vehicles in any kind of emergency.
  
- **SWIFT911 Denver's high-speed Emergency Notification System**
  - Swift911 is Denver's high-speed Emergency Notification System that alerts residents to emergency situations like police activity, severe storm warnings, road closures, water problems and evacuations that are occurring in their area.
  - **How will I receive Swift911 alerts?**

You decide how you want to be notified. Alerts can be received via telephone, mobile phone, email and text message. You can add multiple phone numbers and choose the order in which notifications are received – cell phone A 1<sup>st</sup>, cell phone B 2<sup>nd</sup>, land line 3<sup>rd</sup>, etc.
  - **How do I sign up for Swift911?**

You can sign up via the Swift911 icon listed on Denver 911's webpage, text Swift911 to 99538, or download the Swift911 Public mobile app. The Swift911 system will already have your land line telephone number if it is publicly listed, but you must sign up to receive alerts for private land line numbers, and for alerts you want sent via mobile phones, email or text. Once you register, you can log in at anytime to update your contact information, remove yourself from the notification list, or to sign up for other notifications that you may find useful.
  
- **TEXTto911 Supports those who are unable to hear, speak or are facing a threatening situation.**

**When should I Text to 911?                      Call if you can, Text if you must**

  - If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired.
  - When you are unable to speak because of an injury or medical emergency.
  - When you are facing a threatening situation and a voice call could increase the threat or compromise your safety.
  - When you are in a remote location or area with limited coverage and a text message is the only option to request emergency services.
  - When you are in an area where the phone lines and cell towers are overwhelmed and only a text can get through to request emergency services.

### **How do I use Text to 911 and what information do I provide?**

- Enter the numbers 911 in the “To” field - do not include dashes (example: 9-1-1).
- Include the location of the emergency in the text and a brief summary of the situation. The most important information a caller can relay via phone or text is the LOCATION where help is needed (example: I’m at 1234 S Main St, intruder in my house).
- The Denver 911 call taker will reply to the text message with a series of questions. Answer the questions and follow the instructions provided to the best of your ability.
- Be as attentive as possible to the text message conversation with Denver 911 using short and timely texts.
- Do not use abbreviations or slang, as the meaning could be misconstrued and create a delay in the arrival of emergency services.
- Stay engaged in the text conversation as much as possible and do not delete the message or turn off your phone until the Denver 911 call taker concludes the conversation.

### **What else do I need to know about Text to 911?**

- The Denver 911 call center can only receive and reply to Text to 911 texts and cannot initiate a text message conversation without the caller texting 911 first.
- If you attempt to send a text to 911 in an area outside of Denver where the service is not yet available, an automatic “bounce-back” message will be sent to your phone advising you to contact emergency services by an alternative means, such as a voice call or a telecommunications relay service (the latter is used by consumers who are deaf, hard of hearing or who have a speech disability).
- If you accidentally send a Text to 911 please let the Denver 911 call taker know that emergency services are not needed.
- Only consumers who have purchased a text or data plan through their wireless provider can send text messages to 911. Text message rates apply.
- Text to 911 does not work with applications that do not support texting to and from U.S. phone numbers.
- Photos and videos cannot be sent to Denver 911 at this time.

For more information on these programs or to sign up:

<https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/departments-of-safety/emergency-services/911-emergency-communications.html>