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FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Evacuation of buildings upon sounding of the fire alarm is vital to the safety of the occupants. Many people consider the sounding of an alarm a nuisance and assume that all alarms are accidental or a system malfunction. People also tend to assume that, if there were a fire, once seen, there would be sufficient time to get out. These are dangerous assumptions. On February 20, 2003, 100 people died when fire swept through The Station nightclub in Warwick, Rhode Island. Even though they saw the fire starting on the stage, they could not out run the rapidly advancing flames.

The following procedures are simple yet vital to the safety of the occupants and will aid in the confinement and extinguishment of the fire;

1. If you discover a fire, go to the nearest fire alarm pull station and sound the alarm. Do not attempt to fight the fire if you are alone in the building or have no experience using a fire extinguisher. Once outside, go to the nearest telephone and call 9-1-1 to confirm that there is a fire. Dialing 9-1-1 also works with cellular phones. Wait outside the building for the arrival of the fire department. You can be of immense help if you're available to tell firefighters where the fire is.

2. If the fire alarm sounds, **DO NOT** attempt to silence or reset the alarm. If the alarm is the result of a system malfunction, fire and alarm service personnel will not be able to find the problem if the alarm has been reset.

3. All occupants should *calmly exit the building* and go to pre-arranged meeting places. Time should not be spent attempting to retrieve documents or other objects.

4. If there are to be groups of young children, elderly or handicapped individuals in the building, ***responsible persons*** should be pre-assigned to respond to those areas to assist them in evacuation. In the event an individual could not be evacuated from a building due to physical limitations, they should be taken to a safe area, such as an exit stairwell. **Upon arrival of the fire department, the responsible person should notify a fire officer of their location.** The individual should be reassured that he/she will be evacuated by firefighters if conditions warrant.

5. Interior doors should be closed on the way out. If there is a fire, closing doors will help to confine the fire and reduce the spread of smoke to other parts of the building.

6. Once outside, *no one should re-enter the building for any reason*. If possible, take a head count and report any missing persons, or suspected missing persons to the firefighters immediately.

The most important element of fire safety is being prepared. Be familiar with all ways out of the building in case one is blocked by fire or smoke. Be familiar with the types and locations of fire extinguishers in your building. Many fire extinguisher service companies offer hands on classes. Make sure that exit doors are unobstructed and operable without the use of a key. Doors with closers, especially stair well doors, should never be propped open as this could allow smoke to render exits un-usable. And remember, for a fire safety plan to work, it has to apply to **everyone**.