

# **FIRE SAFETY AND EVACUATION PLAN**

*for*

## **LOW-RISE DEVELOPMENTS**



*Protecting our most  
valuable asset:*



*Our Families*

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**DISCLAIMER**

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**Fire Pre-Plan Escape for  
LOW-RISES**

***Objective of this Manual***

To provide for the safety of residents and others in public housing through fire prevention and safety awareness, and fire/emergency preparedness. Also, to teach evacuation procedures in the event of life threatening situations that necessitate evacuation from the building to a safe designated location.

***Before a Fire Starts: What You Should DO***

**Be Familiar with the Building Alarms**

Each building is equipped with building alarms, in the form of heat and smoke detectors in common areas (hallways, community rooms, etc.). When the alarm is activated, a signal will be transmitted to the enunciator board located at the entrance of the building. Never attempt to fight a fire by yourself -- call for help. You may be wasting precious time. To familiarize yourself with what to do in the event of a fire, read the section in this manual entitled



“After a Fire Starts: What You Should Do”.

**Persons with Disabilities**

The names and apartment numbers of any disabled residents should be given to the Jersey City Fire Department NOW to be placed on file for future reference. A responsible



person that resides in the same area as the disabled person should be assigned to assist them in the event of a fire or other emergency. The phone number of this person should be posted near the telephone of the disabled person. The Building Manager should also be aware of any person in the building that has a handicap or will require special assistance during a fire or other emergency.

**Decide on a Pre-Arranged Meeting Place**

Hold a meeting with all family members to discuss and decide on a meeting place, should the building be evacuated because of a fire or other life threatening situations such as



bomb threat or gas leak. This pre-arranged meeting place should be a safe distance from the building and everyone should know where it is, even children. Teach everyone in your family that this is where they should go to meet should they need to evacuate the building. This will help the Fire Department take a headcount to ensure that everyone is out of the building.

Know How to Reach the Fire Department

Have the phone number for the Fire Department posted by the telephone. Teach small children how to dial the phone number for the Fire Department or how to dial 911 in case of emergency. If the fire is in your apartment, or if you have heavy smoke conditions or smell gas, do not stop to call the Fire Department. First leave the building, retreat to a safe area, and then call the Fire Department and Management Office at the respective development to report the incident. Be familiar with the location of the public telephones in your neighborhood so that you may make these phone calls as quickly as possible.



Test Smoke Alarms

Test the smoke alarms in your apartment *at least* ONCE A MONTH. You can test them by pushing and holding the test button located on the smoke alarm until you hear an ear-piercing sound. This will let you know that the smoke alarm is working properly. If you do not hear this sound, replace the old battery with a new one and test it again. If you think that your smoke alarm is not working properly call the Manager’s Office to let them know immediately. Under no circumstances should you remove or disable the smoke detector, doing so may result in injury or death.



If your smoke alarm emits a voluntary beep about once per minute, it means that the battery is weak. The battery must be replaced immediately with a new, fresh battery.

Keep Common Stairwells/Hallways Clear

Do not create hazards by leaving bundles of any kind (i.e., newspapers, clothes, garbage or debris) on the landings in the common stairwells or in the hallways. Not only is this creating a potential fire hazard, it is a Fire Code violation and will only create an obstacle as people try to exit the building in the event of a fire.



Fire Escapes

Fire escapes and fire escape windows shall be maintained free and clear of all obstructions:



- ✓ Do not block windows that lead to fire escapes. Keep all furniture clear of this area and do not store or pile objects in front of it. Do not hang anything such as plants from the window frame.
- ✓ Never put air conditioning units in windows that lead to fire escapes.
- ✓ Never place objects of any kind on the fire escapes.

Household Safety Tips

You must take steps to make sure that a fire does not start in your home. Remember these tips to help protect you and your family from fire:

- ◆ Never smoke in bed
- ◆ Keep matches and other things that can start fire away from children
- ◆ Store materials that may be accidentally set on fire in proper containers and never store or use them near open flames or sparks.

- ◆ Keep electrical appliances and cords in good working order. If you notice any cracks, frays, broken plugs or loose connections on any cord, replace the cord immediately or notify your Building Manager.
- ◆ Don't use lamps that fall over easily or shades that are too close to bulbs. Never use a higher wattage bulb than recommended. This can burn the lampshade and may cause a fire.
- ◆ Never overload electrical circuits. Special appliances such as air conditioners require their own heavy-duty outlets. Extension cords used incorrectly can often cause fires. Don't run extension cords under rugs, across doorways, and never hang them on nails. The outside protective cover will tear away, exposing live wires and creating a fire hazard.
- ◆ Do not use portable heaters of any kind.
- ◆ Keep stoves clean from grease.
- ◆ Put together a fire emergency kit that includes flashlights, batteries, transistor radio, filter masks and extra keys. Make sure everyone in the family knows the location of the emergency kit.

### Hold Fire Drills



Hold fire drills every 6 months to make sure that everyone, even small children, knows what to do to escape safely in case of fire. Here are some things that you can do during your fire drills to help your family prepare for a fire emergency:

- Be familiar with your building. Map out an exit plan as well as an alternate exit plan.
- Know more than one way to exit your floor and your building.
- Make sure everyone knows what the sound of the smoke alarm means. Tell children that they must be ready to leave the building by themselves if necessary. Remind them to go to the pre-arranged meeting place and wait for the rest of the family.
- Remind everyone to check to see if doors are hot before they open them, to stay close to the floor and to crawl if they have to, and to use another exit if a door is hot and should not be opened.
- Teach children how to report emergencies.
- Keep fire extinguishers in a safe place in your apartment. Teach your family when and how to use this equipment.

### False Alarms

Unfortunately, there may be times when fire alarms malfunction or cooking or excessive steam and mist from baths or laundry rooms may trigger the alarm system. These conditions should be reduced in frequency with the passage of time. However, action must be taken in response to every alarm. The one you ignore may be the real one.

***After a Fire Starts: What You Should Do***

*To Report A Fire, Gas Leak or Smoke Condition*

- ◆ Call the Fire Department (911) and/or PSE&G (for gas leak)
- ◆ Call the Management Office of your site
- ◆ Alert anyone in the area to conditions

*When You Hear a Fire Alarm*

- ✓ Don't Panic. Stay Calm. Your safe escape may depend on thinking clearly and remembering what you have practiced.
- ✓ Alert everyone at home that there may be a fire. If they are asleep, wake them.
- ✓ If the fire is not inside your apartment and you are not in any immediate danger, ***DO NOT LEAVE YOUR APARTMENT***. Call the Fire Department immediately (911) and notify the Management Office of your location and condition. Give them your name, location and number of people in the apartment. Await instructions from the Fire Department or building security.
- ✓ Be prepared to leave. Locate your fire emergency kit (see *Household Safety Tips* section).
- ✓ Do not enter the common stairwell. Remain in your apartment and await instructions.
- ✓ Close all doors tightly and cover all cracks around the door with wet towels to keep smoke out.
- ✓ Wave a towel or sheet from the window to alert firefighters of your location.
- ✓ You may open a window slightly at the top (to let smoke out) and at the bottom (to let fresh air in). Be ready to close the window quickly if smoke is drawn in.
- ✓ Never break a window. Falling debris may injure people and you will not be able to close a broken window.

*If a Fire Starts **Inside** Your Apartment*

- ✓ Leave the apartment **IMMEDIATELY, CLOSING** the door (but DO NOT lock it).
- ✓ Sound the building alarm, if you can do so safely. Never attempt to fight the fire. Leave the building as quickly as possible.
- ✓ If your apartment is filled with smoke, stay close to the floor; smoke and hot gases rise toward the ceiling. Cover your nose and mouth with a wet cloth and take short, shallow breaths.
- ✓ Remember to close all doors behind you. Check the stairwell before entering. If smoke is in the area, go to an alternate means for evacuation. **NEVER ENTER A SMOKE-FILLED AREA.**
- ✓ Once you are safely out of the apartment, call the Fire Department **IMMEDIATELY** and notify the Management Office of your site to report the location and nature of the fire.
- ✓ If you were instructed to evacuate the building, meet at your pre-arranged meeting place after leaving the building. DO NOT leave the pre-arranged location until the Fire Department has made sure everyone in the family is safe.
- ✓ NEVER re-enter a burning or smoke-filled building.

*If you are unable to exit your apartment because of smoke or fire:*

- ✓ If fire blocks access to your apartment door or the stairwell is filled with smoke, remain calm. Stay in your apartment. Retreat to the window or fire escape. Close the door behind you and telephone the Fire Department and the Management Office immediately and give your location and condition.
- ✓ Close all doors tightly and cover all cracks around the door with wet towels to keep smoke out.
- ✓ Wave a towel or sheet from the window to alert firefighters of your location.
- ✓ Keep doors and windows closed unless you open them to escape and close them again as you leave. Never break a window. Falling glass may injure people and you will not be able to close a broken window.

*What To Do If You Smell Gas*

If you smell gas in your apartment:

- ✓ Put out all open flames. Do not light matches or lighters, and don't attempt to light your appliance.
- ✓ Don't touch electric switches, thermostats or appliance controls. They may cause sparks.

- ✓ Open windows and outside doors for ventilation.
- ✓ If the odor is strong, don't use your telephone.
- ✓ Leave the premises and call PSE&G (1-800-436-7734) from a neighbor's home and remain outside until PSE&G arrives.
- ✓ Once you are out of the building, alert the Building Manager immediately that you smell gas in your apartment

***If a Fire Starts Outside Your Apartment***

*In case of fire, the most critical areas for immediate evacuation are the fire floors, the floor above the fire, and the floor below the fire. Residents on all other floors should **REMAIN IN THEIR APARTMENT** until further orders are received from the Fire Department.*

- ✓ Upon hearing an alarm, residents in no immediate danger shall remain in their apartments and await instructions from the Fire Department. Alert security to your location and condition. Immediately call the Fire Department (911).
- ✓ If you receive instructions to evacuate the building, listen carefully and do as you are told. You may be instructed to stay where you are. If you are instructed to leave the building, do as follows:
  - Touch your apartment entrance door and walls. If they feel hot, **DO NOT** open the door, there may be fire and smoke in the common stairwell.
  - If the door is cool, open it slowly and check the common stairwell for smoke and fire. Have wet towels and sheets prepared to cover your face and body.
  - If the common stairwell is clear, proceed to the pre-planned location outside the building. Close your apartment door behind you but **DO NOT** lock it.
  - If the door is hot, stay in your apartment. Fill a tub with water and place wet towels at the bottom of your entrance door to keep smoke from penetrating.
  - If flames appear at the window, remove flammables from the area of the window if you can do this without getting hurt, especially curtains and drapes.
  - If smoke does enter the apartment, retreat to the window or fire escape. Make sure you close the door to the apartment. Wait for instructions from the Fire Department.
  - Do not try to escape through dense smoke or flames. If these are blocking your exit, return to the apartment, close the door and await instructions from the Fire Department.

*If you must evacuate the building, **DO NOT** waste precious seconds trying to grab personal possessions. Your life is your most valuable possession and even a few seconds wasted can endanger it.*