

CAO Best Practices Guide: Emergency Planning and Preparedness

Advanced Director Training



Condominium
Authority of
Ontario

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Have a Question?

If you have a question about any of the information in this Guide, please contact us. We have a team available to answer any questions you may have.

This guide may be updated from time to time. You can access the most up-to-date version on the CAO website.

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Document Purpose

This Advanced Director Training Guide supplements CAO's Advanced Director Training Modules and serves to deepen participants' knowledge of issues affecting condominium living. This guide will provide directors with assistance in identifying, planning for, and responding to problems that arise suddenly or unexpectedly in the condominium corporation, and which present serious risk to health, life, property, or the environment.

This guide will be updated from time to time. To obtain the most up-to-date version, please visit CAO's website at condoauthorityontario.ca

Introduction

Emergency planning and preparedness is a process by which condominium boards, along with condominium managers and staff (if available), work to identify potential hazards, plan a response to those hazards, and communicate about emergencies while they are happening.

Condominiums can face many types of hazards, some of which are outlined in the box to the right. Not all hazards will become an emergency – but some will.

It is important to identify those hazards that are most likely to occur and plan an appropriate response in the event that a particular hazard materializes.

An emergency plan is a written document that helps condominium boards, staff and residents determine how to safeguard against identified hazards, and how best to respond to those that develop into sudden, unexpected, or serious situations.

The main objective of an emergency plan is to:

- Prevent harm or fatalities;
- Reduce damage and prevent losses to property;
- Protect the environment and property; and
- Speed up the return to normal living conditions for owners.

Preparedness is the process of making the condominium and community ready for an emergency. For example, a condominium might increase its preparedness by:

- Physically securing property to protect from weather and other hazards;
- Backing up condominium records;
- Gathering necessary supplies and equipment;
- Holding fire drills;
- Planning and testing safety protocols; and
- Effectively communicating the plan and safety protocols to owners / occupants.

What kinds of hazards can condominiums face?

Condominiums in Ontario may experience a wide range of common and uncommon hazards that could become an emergency.

Hazards that commonly occur within a condominium building, individual living units or commercial units may include:

- *Building fire;*
- *Burst pipe or other localized flooding;*
- *Critical equipment failure, such as HVAC systems during a heatwave;*
- *Power failure of long duration; and*
- *Elevator entrapment.*

Events occurring outside of the condominium corporation can also create an emergency:

- *Pandemic and infectious disease events;*
- *Civic disturbance or riot events; and*
- *Weather events (e.g., extreme heat, extreme cold, winter storms, overland flooding, severe thunderstorms).*

Less common but possible emergency events include:

- *Structural collapse;*
- *Explosion;*
- *Criminal activity;*
- *Condominium fraud or bankruptcy;*
- *Man-made disaster events (e.g., terrorist activity, manufacturing, or industrial disasters, accidental or deliberate chemical releases, leaks, or spills, vehicle-based or airplane disasters, nuclear event); and*
- *Other environmental disaster (e.g., widespread flooding, wildland fire, tornado, drought, erosion, landslide).*

Issues and Emergencies

There are many kinds of situations that arise in condominiums – often when they are least expected – which present challenges to the condominium board and condominium managers. Such challenges range from minor inconveniences to serious emergencies.

Condominium boards, on-site staff, and owners / occupants may all have different views about which situations could be considered inconveniences, issues, and / or emergencies.



What is considered an emergency for one individual may be a minor inconvenience to another. It is important for directors in distinguish true emergencies, from serious but non-emergency issues. It is also important that directors treat all concerns with respect and take appropriate actions to resolve the situation, even if there is less urgency.

Directors should consider active management of those situations that have become true emergencies and plan an appropriate response to deal with them as they unfold.

While each community will have different needs, a key point of difference between an issue and an emergency is its *immediacy* or *urgency*:

- **Issues (and inconveniences)** can usually be addressed in a *timely but non-urgent* manner. For more information on how to manage issues in a condominium, click [here](#).
- **Emergencies** usually pose an *immediate and serious risk* to health, life, the condominium's property, or the broader environment. Emergencies should trigger an immediate response to prevent or minimize those harms.

Roles and Responsibilities in Emergency Planning

In any situation or challenge facing a condominium corporation, condominium directors and condominium managers (if applicable) have equally important but different roles to play.

The Role of the Condominium Board

Condominium boards in Ontario exist to manage the affairs of the condominium corporation. Being elected to a condominium board requires condominium directors to fulfill fiduciary, legal and ethical responsibilities.

Many condominium corporations are self-managed, which often requires more work on the part of condominium directors to identify hazards and develop emergency plans [see Tip box, right].

For those condominium corporations that employ or contract a condominium manager, typically the role of the condominium board is:

- *To ensure that appropriate and effective emergency plans have been developed;*
- *To oversee their implementation by the condominium manager; and*
- *To ensure that effective preparedness has taken place through the condominium manager.*

The condominium board must also ensure that the condominium manager is appropriately supported and enabled to respond effectively to emergencies, should they arise.

During the planning process, condominium directors may be assigned to play a

hands-on role to respond to an actual emergency. For example, they may be assigned specific responsibilities in an emergency plan, or volunteer to act as an evacuation warden or fire warden.



Part of being a condominium director is working on behalf of the community. Condominium directors may wish to consider that they can play a role in providing comfort and assurance to the community during an actual emergency. Staying calm, being visible and taking charge of the situation are important signals that things are under control.

Tip: Self-Managed Condominiums

For self-managed condominium corporations, condominium boards may find themselves more ‘hands-on’ in the process of developing the emergency plan and overseeing preparedness.

Directors in self-managed corporations should consider:

- Engaging a third-party consultant to assist in developing emergency plans and other required safety plans;
- Assigning the responsibility of developing plans to a director; or
- Engaging the community to assist in developing emergency plans, recognizing that the condominium board has ultimate accountability for ensuring it is done properly.

Once plans are developed, the condominium board will continue to play a more active role, such as:

- Testing the plans;
- Adjusting the plans as new potential hazards are identified;
- Delegating responsibility for responding to emergencies to other condominium board members or community members;
- Communicating with residents about emergency plans or safety protocols; and
- Being directly involved in responding to an actual emergency should it arise.

The Role of the Condominium Manager

For condominium corporations that choose to employ or contract a condominium manager, these licensed professionals can be an important source of information, guidance and expertise.

While condominium managers typically do not lead the planning process, boards may benefit from obtaining the assistance and expertise of their condominium manager to:

- Help identify potential hazards, and plan for specific emergencies,
- Determine which emergency and / or safety plans are required for the community,
- Decide whether to self-develop an emergency plan, or to purchase a plan from a qualified third-party supplier,
- Assist with testing of the emergency response plans, once they have been developed, and
- Communicate with residents and staff to share information about the plans, what to do, and how information will be distributed in the event of an emergency.

As part of the planning process, it is also important for the condominium board and condominium manager to describe emergency procedures in detail with clear task assignments for all parties – directors, condominium manager, any on-site staff (e.g., superintendent, cleaners, security services), and any volunteer roles that may be identified in the plan.

It is important that everyone is clear who is doing what in the event of an actual emergency.

For example, who is permitted to declare an emergency? Who should talk to emergency responders when they arrive? Who should send a message to residents? What is the protocol for shutting off critical systems (such as chillers, boilers, pumps)? Who is authorized and trained to do so?

Tip: What do the by-laws say?

All condominium corporations have by-laws that outline how certain activities are done, and what the roles and responsibilities are for condominium board, condominium management and owners on a wide range of matters.

Careful review of the condominium corporation's by-laws is a useful starting point for condominium directors before emergency planning begins.

Sometimes the by-laws specify how emergency plans are developed, how owners must be engaged, or provide other guidance to the condominium board about the required functions of the condominium corporation.

Understanding Legal Requirements

In Ontario, *the Condominium Act, 1998* (the “Condo Act”) and the associated Ontario Regulation 213/07 (the Fire Code”) govern many of the legal requirements pertaining to condominium emergency planning and preparedness.

Other legislation, such as the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997*, govern aspects of condominium living related to fire safety.

For example, all condominium corporations must have certain practices and plans in place, such as:

- *Purchasing and maintaining insurance* under section 99 of the Condo Act in the event of damage to units and common elements caused by major perils (such as fire, lightning, smoke, windstorm, hail, explosion, water escapes, strikes, riots, impact by aircraft or vehicles, vandalism, or other malicious acts);
- Preparation of a *Fire Safety Plan (if applicable)*, under section 2.8 of the “Fire Code”. Depending on the size and/or number of occupants of the building, the condominium board should undertake, or contract a supplier, to develop a *Fire Safety Plan*. This plan must be made available to all residents, fire departments, emergency medical services, and police upon their arrival, as well as kept at the local fire prevention office;
- The Fire Code has many other sections and requirements that must be met, including *provisions for training staff, fire drills, and reviewing / revising the Fire Safety Plan*. The Office of the Fire Marshall and Emergency Management has information and resources available to help understand the Fire Code, click [here](#) to visit their website.

Additionally, condominium directors / manager(s), and other staff or personnel may collect, store and have access to *Personally Identifiable Information* (PII) of owners, employees, even other directors. Any PII collected for use when applying this guide should be treated as confidential information.

Limitations of Emergency Planning and Preparedness

It is important to remember that no one can predict the future. Identifying and planning for every possible emergency event is impossible.

Condominium boards may wish to consider that effective emergency planning and preparedness should not require extremely detailed planning for all possible situations that could arise.

Creating an effective emergency plan can be done by assessing the most common potential emergencies, those with the most serious consequences (for example, a building fire), and developing a process for assessing and managing other situations as they arise.

Part 1: Preparing for Emergency Planning and Preparedness

When it comes to developing an emergency plan, there is no ‘one size fits all.’ Each condominium has its own unique needs, which are often determined in part by the physical building and related factors. These factors make each condominium corporation’s emergency plan different from any other.

What Does The Planning Process Look Like?

Emergency planning is an important exercise best led directly by the condominium board.

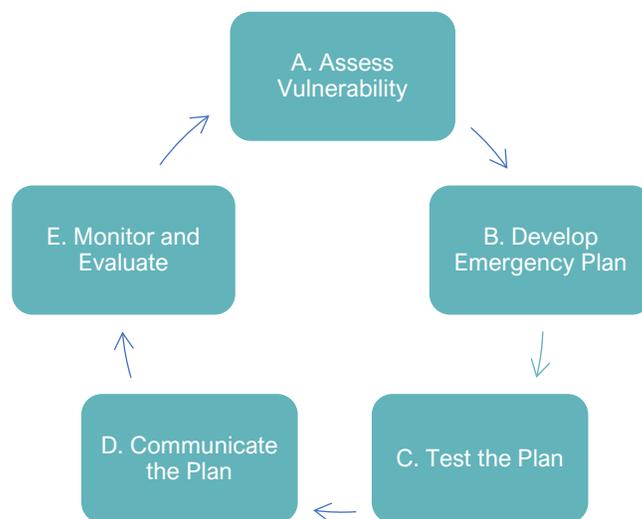


Figure 1: High-Level Emergency Planning Process

Whether or not a third-party consultant is engaged to develop the emergency plan, the condominium board is responsible for ensuring that emergency planning is appropriately performed, and that all necessary factors and threats have been considered. This responsibility cannot be delegated to others.

Figure 1 outlines a high-level five-step planning process that condominium boards may wish to use when developing an emergency plan.

Part Two of this document outlines how this emergency planning process can be implemented by condominium boards.

Who Should Be Involved?

All directors should be involved in the development of the condominium corporation's emergency plan, particularly for condominium corporations that self-manage their affairs.

If the condominium corporation contracts or employs a condominium manager, that individual should play a significant role in developing the plan and supporting the condominium's preparedness.

Condominium directors and condominium managers also need to be fully aware of, and be ready to fulfill their assigned role(s) in the event of an actual emergency.

Some condominium boards may wish to open the planning process to a broader community and involve additional residents. While a 'design by committee' approach may not be wise for this topic, given that the condominium board is responsible for the effectiveness of the plan, some condominium boards may wish to offer limited involvement by community members. Such involvement could include:

- Establishing a special Emergency Planning Committee with defined Terms of Reference to make recommendations to the condominium board;
- Including a small number of selected community members to learn from their expertise, such as retired police or fire professionals; and / or
- Hosting community information sessions from time to time to involve residents at key stages of the planning process.

How Long Does the Process Take?

Emergencies can arise at any time, so condominium boards and condominium managers should begin the process of planning and preparedness as soon as possible.

The process of planning for emergencies takes time, often several months, and will depend heavily on the frequency of planning meetings and how much time individual condominium directors can devote to the process.

As a rule, it is unlikely that an emergency plan could be developed in one day, or even in one weekend.

A key component of preparedness is to test the plan once it has been drafted. Getting ready to test the plan also takes time.

When selecting a timeframe for planning, condominium directors should consider factors such as summer vacation season, winter holidays, periods of major constructions or other distractions, when community engagement might be difficult.

It is important once the planning is complete, that the plan is actively implemented and that preparation for potential emergencies becomes part of normal condominium operations.

Condominium directors should consult [Appendix 1](#) to obtain checklists for emergency planning and preparedness activities (basic and advanced activities).

Part 2: Planning and Preparing for Emergencies

The process outlined in Figure 1 provides a high-level overview of the steps involved in planning and preparing for emergencies. These steps are described in more detail in this section.

A. Assess Vulnerability

Emergency planning and preparedness relies on a solid understanding of the hazards and vulnerabilities that could be faced by the condominium, and which of those factors are most likely to become an emergency.

The following section outlines how condominium boards may assess their community's vulnerability, which will help inform its preparedness needs.

Residential and Commercial Units

Some condominiums are made up entirely of residential living units. Others are of mixed use and may include commercial units as well. When performing emergency planning, the condominium board should consider the proportion of residential units and commercial units and the specific risks associated with each type of occupancy.



Some franchise businesses may have emergency plans provided by a corporate parent company. If an emergency plan has been developed by commercial owners or their tenants, it will be important to align key items such as muster points for employees, which could conflict with or contradict a residential evacuation plan.



Commercial units may be standalone businesses, such as restaurants, dentist offices or coffee shops. Other commercial units may be operated by franchise businesses or those with a corporate parent company that requires plans to be put in place for fire safety and emergency planning.



Condominium boards may wish to consult with commercial owners / tenants, to determine whether time has been spent on emergency planning already, and to align safety protocols to avoid confusion in the event of emergency.

Community Members with Special Needs

When performing emergency planning, condominium boards can identify and accommodate community members with special needs by engaging them directly in the discussion and communicating directly about their needs.

For example, condominium boards may wish to:

- Provide a confidential forum for individuals with special needs to get involved, provide feedback, and declare if they wish to be heard during emergency planning; and
- Assign responsibility to a condominium director for collecting and documenting input from individuals with special needs.

Once those special needs are identified, it will be important to incorporate the right accommodations for these needs into the emergency plan.

Community members can be invited to self-identify to the condominium board if they need extra support in case of emergency. It is important that the condominium board understands the individual's preferred way of being supported. For example:

- **People with Disabilities.** Condominium corporations that are required to have a Fire Safety Plan should already maintain a list of occupants who are unable to walk without assistance (known to some condominium management companies as “non-ambulatory residents”)¹. This list may be a starting point for identifying other people with disabilities in the community that may need extra help during an emergency.

Individuals’ needs and preferences may vary widely, and it is important that the emergency plan reflect the right level of support for all. The condominium board must not make assumptions about what an individual can or cannot do. For example:

- One wheelchair user may self-identify as needing to be physically carried to safety if elevators are not working, whereas another wheelchair user may be able to manage with special equipment such as canes or crutches.
- A frail senior may need someone to physically assist them out of the building, whereas another may not need physical assistance but might have other conditions which could cause difficulty hearing or following directions.
- Someone who is blind or deaf may not need assistance or a guide to evacuate the building but may wish to be listed as needing special support to ensure they have been successfully evacuated.

Condominium directors should become educated about the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (“AODA”), as well as the *Ontario Building Code*, and concepts of inclusive design, which should be considered in emergency planning and preparedness and may assist condominium boards in making long-term decisions about upgrading common areas to improve accessibility and inclusiveness.

- **Children.** Residents may have older children that are periodically left alone in the unit. These families may wish to be identified and confirmed they have successfully evacuated in the event of emergency.
- **Speakers of Other Languages.** Speakers of other languages that are not English may require special notification that an emergency has been called, advised that they are required to evacuate and how further information will

¹ Under section 2.8 of the Fire Code, a Fire Safety Plan requires a procedure for evacuating occupants, including individuals that require assistance to evacuate. This list is kept confidentially in the locked fire box for emergency responders. Names and unit numbers must be removed to protect privacy in the event that the Fire Safety Plan is distributed outside of the condominium board or other authorized individuals.

be provided to them. A pre-printed card in their preferred language could be helpful.

- **Pets.** Some condominium corporations keep a 'pet register' so there is an understanding of what kinds of pets exist and in which units they are located. Pet owners may need instructions and information on if, when and how their pets will be evacuated to avoid them attempting a rescue.

One condominium director of a self-managed condominium corporation, or the condominium manager, should keep a list of occupants with special needs that require extra attention and support during an emergency. The list should reflect all residents of a condominium corporation and include:

- Full names;
- Unit numbers;
- Contact information; and
- Type of support needed.

Condominium directors should have easy access to this information in case they are assigned a task during an emergency.

It is important that condominium directors, management, and staff maintain confidentiality and privacy when engaging with community members about their need for support.

Information regarding the special needs of residents must be kept confidential. to condominium directors and/or condominium manager if one exists.

Tip: Assessing the Condominium's Unique Resident Mix

Every condominium will have a unique mix of residents, some of whom may have extra vulnerability in times of emergency.

There are several factors that the condominium board may look at to anticipate and predict the different needs of the community.

Residents with disabilities

When planning, you should work to accommodate residents who have varying levels of:

- Difficulty with physical mobility or those who may need assistance to evacuate;
- Difficulty speaking and / or understanding information;
- Difficulty with vision; and

- Difficulty with hearing.

Other diverse groups

It is important that the planning process consider other diverse groups that may have special or specific needs, such as:

- Seniors;
- Children;
- People lacking fluency in English; and
- People with pets.

Managing Resident Information

Records management and retention are important areas of compliance for condominium corporations.

All condominium corporations must retain a number of different types of records under section 55 of the Condo Act, however the by-laws of some condominium corporations may also require that certain information or documents must also be retained, such as records that fall under section 1 (1) 10 of O. Reg. 48/01, and/or section 13.1 (1) 7 of O. Reg. 48/01.

Directors should note that some resident information collected for the purpose of emergency planning may form a condominium corporation record under section 13.1 (1) 7 of Ontario Regulation, 48/01.

However, care must be taken to protect personal and confidential information (such as disability status, health and/or medical information) which may be restricted by section 55 (4) of the Condo Act.

Condominium directors may wish to adopt extra precautions to avoid inadvertent disclosure of restricted information (such as a person's medical status or disability). Such precautions may include:

- Adopting a Privacy and Confidentiality policy for the condominium corporation, which ensures certain protocols are followed when handling owner-related information;
- Implementing a Code of Conduct for the condominium board which is signed by all condominium directors;
- Ensuring any individuals involved in emergency planning sign a Confidentiality Agreement, including condominium directors, condominium manager, staff, emergency volunteers and any other parties;

Physical Vulnerabilities

In addition to the make-up of the condominium community and the special needs that some residents may have, the condominium has a set of physical components, features, and characteristics of its physical environment that may increase or decrease its vulnerability to certain hazards. Some of these features or characteristics may be related to:

- **Location** – Condominiums in densely populated communities may face different hazards than condominiums in less populated communities. Similarly, condominiums on a waterfront could face different hazards than those that are in-land, or that are at the bottom of a large hill versus those at the top of a hill.
- **Age** – Newer buildings may fall prey to different emergency events, than if the building is older. Has the building envelope and its critical systems been properly maintained? Have key pieces of equipment been replaced, or are they original?
- **Size and height** - Buildings with hundreds of units may have a higher level of complexity in evacuation than buildings with a relatively small number of units (e.g., fewer than 100). Similarly, high-rise buildings may be exposed to different hazards than low-rise buildings and have a much higher level of complexity in emergency response.
- **Presence or absence of on-site support services** – Buildings with security services or resident superintendent may have a different capacity to respond to emergencies than those without these services. If there are on-site services, are they available 24 hours? What about weekends and evenings?
- **Community composition and unique needs** – What hazards or risks arise given the building’s unique mix of units, and / or the people living in them?

Assessing the condominium’s unique vulnerabilities should be done carefully and with care to identify the nature of each vulnerability, and more importantly, how an emergency response should adapt based on those vulnerabilities.



As a rule, it is better to complete an emergency plan now and improve it later, than to get stuck or spend too long trying to draft the plan in the first place.

Deciding Which Potential Emergencies to Plan for

Some condominium boards may be new to the emergency planning process. Others will have already undertaken a process of emergency response planning and may be more familiar with the core concepts.

It is important to remember that no emergency plans will look alike. Emergency planning can be performed for an infinite number of potential emergencies. While it is important for a condominium community to be adequately prepared, it is impossible to identify and plan for all possible emergencies.

Once the condominium's vulnerability to a range of hazards is better understood, the condominium board should then consider which hazards present the greatest risk, and select a subset of these to prioritize for emergency planning.

Identifying and Selecting Potential Emergencies

When deciding whether or not to make an emergency plan for a particular hazard, directors can consider the *likelihood* of an event and the *impact* of such an event on the community, if it were to arise.

Directors can begin with the possible hazard examples that are listed in the Introduction section of this document. Each one should be reviewed and discussed by those involved in the planning process to decide if the hazard is:

- **Reasonably likely to occur, AND**
- **Highly impactful and most serious if they do occur.**

If the answer is yes to both, then hazard should be included in the emergency plan.

For events that are already occurring, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, but the current impact at this stage may not be clear, directors may wish to consider whether another wave or new variant may require emergency actions. If so, an emergency plan may be necessary.

Formal Risk Assessment and Prioritization

If a condominium board is more experienced in emergency planning and is ready to add depth and complexity to its planning process, then they could consider performing a formal prioritization exercise.

Risk assessment is a useful technique that condominium boards in a range of industries use to help prioritize and select which emergencies require a formal plan. It is a more complex and time-consuming exercise that involves:

- Identification of the risk universe for the condominium;
- Design of a risk assessment scale, which allows each risk or hazard to be rated in terms of:
 - 1) The *probability or likelihood of occurring* on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is low and 5 is high.
 - 2) The *impact* of this hazard, if it were to occur, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is low and 5 is high.
- Formal risk assessment meetings of those involved in planning, in which the assessment is performed for each risk or hazard and thoroughly discussed. This allows for good alignment and prioritization but is much more time-consuming.

While this robust risk assessment process is leading practice and may be appropriate for more mature condominium corporations with pre-existing emergency plans, for first-time planners, it may add unnecessary time and effort to the process.

Caution should be used when adding a formal risk assessment to the planning process.

Getting the Right Help and Advice

It can be overwhelming to plan for an emergency without professional assistance, especially in a very large condominium corporation.

The condominium board may wish to seek out professional assistance when developing plans and may wish to obtain this advice externally. This could include the work of Fire Safety Plan preparation services, professional architects, or engineers, building inspectors, contractors, or other advisors. When evaluating an external professional for a contract to assist the condominium board with planning, the condominium board should consider:

- The credentials and licenses of the professional;
- The experience of the professional with emergency planning, including planning for buildings of similar age, design, and size;
- The price and scope of the services; and
- The timeline to complete the required service.

Maintaining a Copy of the Corporation's Records Off-site

Even before the emergency plan is complete, it is a good practice for condominium corporations to arrange for a digital copy of the condominium corporation's records to be stored off-site and / or online, in case paper copies of documents are destroyed.

Condominium corporations are required by section 13.2 of O. Reg. 48/01 to store records in a certain manner. For more information on these requirements, please see section 13.2 of O. Reg. 48/01 by clicking [here](#).

In general, the records commonly required in an emergency include:

- Emergency plan;
- Contact information for the condominium board, owners, emergency responders, and key suppliers;
- Fire Safety Plan;
- Insurance policies;
- Records required by the condominium corporation's by-laws; and
- Other records of files that are deemed important by the condominium board and/or condominium manager to help them be more accessible, efficient and effective in an emergency.

These records should be accessible quickly in the event of an emergency.

All paper and digital records need to be managed in accordance with section 55 of the Condo Act, and stored in accordance with the section 13.2 of O. Reg. 48/01. A copy should also be retained in the condominium office and/or by a director.

Condominium managers and/or directors should ensure regular backups are being made of all digital documents and records. A leading practice in data protection is to use a “3-2-1” back up strategy, which involves:



- Making three (3) separate copies of all digital data, documents, and records;
- Using (at least) two (2) different storage mediums or devices (e.g. USB flas/thumb drive, external hard disk, cloud storage); and
- Retaining one (1) copy in a location off-site.

Backups should be checked and verified regularly to ensure the data is accessible. Computers and other operating equipment should be services regularly, and the contents of the digital record storage reviewed at least once a year to ensure that data and documents are sufficiently up-to-date and accessible.

B. Develop Emergency Plan(s)

Once potential hazards have been assessed and a shortlist of high priority potential emergencies have been identified, the condominium board can proceed to develop an emergency plan.

An **emergency plan** is a written document that captures and communicates important processes and procedures that are needed in the event of emergency. Typically, emergency plans are presented in a step-by-step fashion that will allow any reader to understand what is expected and how the condominium has decided it will respond to the emergency.

As a rule, it should include all the information that will be necessary in the event of emergency, since there is no guarantee that the condominium board, condominium directors, or the condominium manager will have access to computer systems or other records.

There is no exact formula for developing an emergency plan, however the most common sections are listed in the Tip box, above right, and described in greater detail in the sections below.



Note: All condominiums in Ontario with more than 10 occupants are required by law to have a Fire Safety Plan in accordance with section 2.8 of the Fire Code. This document typically includes an audit of the building, contact information, and some emergency procedures such as evacuation.

It is important that the Fire Safety Plan and Emergency Plan do not contradict each other. Coordination of plans should be done carefully to avoid confusion or delay in timely and accurate response during an emergency.

Tip: Sample Table of Contents

An emergency plan commonly includes sections such as:

- Site Plan;
- Evacuation Plan;
- Standard Operating Procedures and Emergency-Specific Procedures;
- Muster Point;
- Roles and Responsibilities;
- Communications Plan; and
- Emergency Contact Information for Condominium, Suppliers, and Owner / Occupants.

Site Plan

In times of emergency, it is important that directors and condominium managers have up-to-date information in one place to inform their actions and to help make on-the-spot decisions. This can at least help minimize loss of property, and sometimes mean the difference between life and death.

The site plan is a key component of a condominium's emergency plan. One may have been developed in the condominium's Fire Safety Plan, or can be created new for the emergency plan.

A site plan typically contains a detailed overview of the condominium's entire layout on a floor-by-floor basis. It should mark the location of key structures, critical equipment, and other details which will assist the condominium board and emergency responders in minimizing risks to the community and property. Some key information to include in this section:

- Where is the Fire Safety Plan kept?
- Where are the pulls for the fire alarms?
- Does the condominium have one or more emergency generators? Where are they kept?
- Where are the telephone systems and security systems housed?
- Does the condominium have emergency lighting? In the stairwells as well as the hallways?
- Where is the emergency shut-off for the condominium's important systems, such as electricity, water main and natural gas? What about its equipment such as the chillers, boilers and other HVAC equipment?
- Where is the muster point for residents?
- Where is construction or other debris kept or staged for pick-up?
- Where are the sewage lift stations?

Ideally, the site plan will be a visual diagram with each of these items clearly labelled so that emergency respondents and others can quickly identify where action should be taken.

Evacuation Plan

An evacuation plan is critical for all condominiums, irrespective of size. The contents of the evacuation plan will vary significantly by the type of building, its height, and complexity of its site operations.

Typically, an evacuation plan includes the following sections:

- Emergency communication or alert system – how residents will be alerted to an emergency and evacuation;
- Location of emergency exits;
- Evacuation routes or exit ways;
- Directions to the outdoor assembly area or muster point; and
- List of nearby food stores, churches, shelters, and gas stations that may be generator-powered, at which residents may wish to seek shelter, food or supplies in the event of evacuation.

The most important aspect of the evacuation plan is that residents know how to evacuate in a safe and orderly fashion, and to avoid further confusion.



The condominium's Fire Safety Plan may have already developed a detailed evacuation plan for the building and contains important fire procedures that should be comparable to what is developed in the emergency plan. Directors should consult this plan and make any necessary updates to the emergency plan, to ensure both plans are aligned.

Standard Operating Procedures

Developing a set of standard operating procedures is a very important element of a condominium's emergency planning process. The precise process and procedure for each situation will vary in part by several factors, such as:

- Type of emergency;
- Severity of emergency;
- Type, height, size, and physical vulnerabilities of the condominium building(s);
- Unique community composition and vulnerabilities; and
- Availability of immediate assistance, including on-site security services or other personnel that can assist in an emergency.

Standard operating procedures typically contain a specific and detailed process for situations such as:

- How and when residents will be alerted to an emergency;
- How and when residents with special needs will be alerted and how assistance will be provided;
- When and how the emergency plan is activated;
- Instructions to residents about when they are required to remain in their units, instead of evacuating the building (known as 'Shelter in Place' procedures);
- How and when to evacuate the building; and
- How and when to shut off the building's water, electricity, gas, and other utilities, as well as its important equipment.

The document should also provide *specific instructions by role*, so that all parties have a clear understanding of what they need to do in the event of an emergency. This information should be sufficiently detailed but not overwhelming.

A helpful way to present procedures by role can be as a table in the plan, ensuring that this section covers:

- Emergency procedures for condominium manager(s);
- Emergency procedures for directors;
- Emergency procedures for on-site security services;
- Emergency procedures for building superintendent and / or other on-site staff;
- Emergency procedures for assigned emergency roles (e.g., emergency coordinator, floor wardens, other volunteers, etc.); and
- Emergency procedures for all residents / occupants (e.g., sheltering in place, getting ready to evacuate).

For any emergencies with sufficient prior warnings (e.g., severe storms), the time between the warning and the emergency should be used to activate emergency procedures.

Muster Point

The condominium's Fire Safety Plan may have already identified an outdoor gathering point or muster point. If it does not, an appropriate location should be identified to ensure that all residents have an identified place to meet during and after an evacuation.

This location should be far enough away from the building that residents are not in danger by meeting there, but within a short walking distance (e.g., five minutes or two to three blocks).

Emergency Roles and Responsibilities

When planning for an emergency, condominium directors should consider all the actions that could be required and assign the appropriate personnel to complete these actions. Some examples include Emergency Coordinator and Warden / Floor Warden.

Emergency Coordinator. To avoid confusion, miscommunications, and delay, it is important that the emergency plan identify *one person* to be "in charge" and coordinate the condominium's emergency response. The plan should clearly outline:

- Name of the identified person to perform this role (and a back-up person if that person is not available at the time of the emergency);
- Top priority activities for the Emergency Coordinator, such as:

- Alerting emergency responders;
- Contacting building staff and Floor Wardens to inform them of the emergency;
- Activating the emergency plan and implementing emergency procedures;
- Collecting information on evaluation status from Floor Wardens, including the names of individuals who have been evacuated safely;
- Informing emergency responders of the location and condition of casualties, as well as any residents who need extra help to evacuate;
- Securing the condominium building(s) and authorizing staff or volunteers to shut off critical systems as needed;
- Coordinating relief or emergency aid;
- Providing emergency responders with access to the building, units, and systems; and
- Facilitating and coordinating communications with residents and others.
- Next priority activities such as:
 - Documenting any damage to building with video, photos, and descriptions;
 - Assisting with recovery by coordinating the clean-up process or reconstruction process;
 - Contacting and coordinating insurance for any potential claims; and
 - Conducting the debrief with the condominium board, and Floor Wardens.

Warden / Floor Warden(s). The plan should also identify a set of volunteers from the community (which might include directors as well) who can act as a Warden and / or Floor Warden.

- *Wardens* assist in ensuring an orderly evacuation of residents through condominium property; and
- *Floor Wardens* are also critical to orderly evacuation but are typically assigned specific floors.

The number of Wardens and / or Floor Wardens will vary by the needs of the condominium, but at a minimum, there should be one or more assigned to each floor of a high-rise building. Low-rise buildings or smaller buildings might need fewer volunteers to assist with evacuation.

While the specific duties will vary by the needs of the condominium, individuals who are assigned a Warden / Floor Warden role, are typically:

- Assigned a specific zone or floor to assist with evacuation;

- Required to wear a fluorescent vest to be easily identifiable in an emergency;
- Fully briefed and familiar with emergency exit routes out of the building and off the property; and
- Responsible for:
 - Maintaining an orderly and controlled evacuation;
 - Guiding occupants in their designated zone to the nearest exit or off the property;
 - Checking common areas and advising occupants of the emergency;
 - Assisting in the evacuation of persons with special needs;
 - Closing doors as they leave the building; and
 - Remaining outside of the building and communicating with emergency services until it is safe to return.

The needs of each condominium will determine how many volunteers are required, and the nature of their assignments. It is important that roles and responsibilities are documented clearly, to avoid confusion and delay in the event of an emergency.

Key Emergency Tasks and Assignments

Broad categories of tasks that are commonly assigned to people include:

- *Activating the emergency plan*, by declaring an emergency and *assuming command* of the emergency procedures;
- *Alerting staff and residents* that an emergency has occurred, and that an emergency has been resolved;
- *Protecting residents and minimizing further harm*, by shutting off critical systems such as gas or electricity;
- *Assisting with evacuation* by guiding residents through hallways, stairwells and out of the building;
- *Coordinating communications with residents*;
- *Coordinating relief and / or medical aid*, such as handing out blankets, food, or clothes, or coordinating medical assistance; and
- *Performing post-evacuation procedures*, such as resuming elevator service, turning on the utilities and other building operations.

Emergency Contact Information

Condominium directors, condominium managers and emergency responders must have immediate access to information in order to efficiently communicate with all the right individuals, without confusion or delay. Important contact information should be documented in the emergency plan.

Typically, contact information is captured for four main groups:

- **Condominium directors, on-site personnel and identified volunteers (e.g., Floor Wardens);**
- **Emergency responders**, and other organizations that can assist in an emergency;
- **Suppliers and back-up suppliers;** and
- **Owners / Occupants** who need to be evacuated in a safe and orderly manner.

Condominium directors, on-site personnel and identified volunteers. This section should clearly identify the name of the individual that has been assigned to the Emergency Coordinator role. This section should also list condominium directors, with their contact information, as well as the condominium corporation's personnel such as condominium manager, security staff, cleaners or other individuals that work in the building.

If volunteers have been assigned roles such as Warden / Floor Wardens, they should also be listed in this section.

Emergency Responders. The plan should include detailed contact information for emergency responders and other organizations that could assist in an emergency, such as:

- Police department
- Fire department
- Ambulance services
- Telephone and internet providers
- Utility and gas companies
- Local chapter of the Canadian Red Cross
- Salvation Army Ontario Division, Emergency Disaster Services
- Local shelters and other emergency response organizations

Suppliers and back-up suppliers. Depending on the type of emergency and the response required, condominium corporations may also need to call on suppliers to assist in managing the hazard when still in progress, implementing an

appropriate resolution, or participate in clean-up when it is over. While not an exhaustive list, such services might include:

- Condominium management head office personnel;
- Contractors and/or handyman services;
- Security services;
- Plumbing, electrical, HVAC and mechanical system maintenance and repair;
- Elevator repair and maintenance services;
- Fire / carbon monoxide / security alarm testing and monitoring;
- Locksmith services;
- Door and gate repairs;
- Towing and vehicle repair services;
- Environmental cleaning services, including flood clean-up, biohazard, chemical cleaning;
- Construction services;
- 'Board-up and secure' services (to quickly secure doors or broken windows);
- Garbage and debris removal;
- Concrete repair services; and
- Swimming pool repair and maintenance.

All the building's suppliers should be listed in the emergency plan *according to the category of services* they provide (e.g., elevator repair, plumbing, HVAC, security services, alarm system, etc.) along with detailed contact information. A table should be included in the plan with the following:

- Category of service;
- Name of key supplier contact(s);
- Phone number(s) including 24-hour access numbers;
- Email addresses; and
- Notes on contractual agreements, if any (e.g., scope, response times, other).

It may also be helpful to list **one or more back-up supplier** for each category of service, if the usual supplier is unable to be reached for some reason or unable to attend the site quickly.

Condominium boards could also consider entering into **emergency supply agreements** to ensure that certain services (e.g., elevator repair, cleaning, electricians, HVAC maintenance) are covered round-the-clock with specific response times in the event of emergency.

Owners and occupants. While no one wants to imagine that bad things could happen to owners / occupants in an emergency, the reality is that the

condominium board and condominium manager needs a fast and efficient way to contact owners at any time of day or night, and / or to contact their next of kin should harm befall the owner in an emergency. This applies to both commercial owners and owners of residential living units.

The condominium board / manager(s) should keep a list with up-to-date contact information for all owners and occupants. This list can be on paper or digital but needs to be accessible to authorized persons for use during an emergency.

Emergency Equipment, Tools and Supplies

The condominium board may wish to consider acquiring certain *emergency equipment and tools* in advance of a potential emergency, to reduce the impact and severity of an emergency.

For example, purchasing external diesel-powered generators to power a condominium might be useful if significant winter events or power outages are anticipated, or an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) for the condominium's fitness facilities in the event of a medical emergency. If the condominium is in a densely populated areas where civic disturbance is anticipated, sheets of plywood and construction materials could be purchased in advance and stored on the premises, in the event of broken windows.

Medical supplies should also be maintained on the condominium's property, such as masks, gauze, bandages, disinfectant, and medical grade disposable gloves. These are typically available in commercial first aid kits. Usage of medical supplies should be tracked, and items replaced as needed or if expired.

The location of these items should be clearly marked on the Site Plan.

Communications During an Emergency

In any emergency communication will be required to prevent damage to property, injury, or loss of life. Key communications accounted for in an emergency response plan could include:

- Communications with emergency responders;
- Communications with owners / occupants;
- Communications between directors;
- Communications with volunteers (e.g., Wardens / Floor Wardens);
- Communication with key suppliers; and
- Communication with news media.

Communication during an emergency can be overwhelming. Numerous parties impacted by an event could be seeking communication at once. Some individuals may be highly stressed or suffering from panic. It is important to have adequately thought-through the plan for how all the necessary communications will take place.

To plan for communication to each of these groups, the condominium board should consider and document their plans by following a simple *Who, What, When, Where, and How* model:

Key Questions to be Answered	
Who	<p>Who is authorized to declare an emergency and activate the plan?</p> <p>Who will communicate with emergency responders? Which ones – all of them?</p> <p>Who will alert residents and owners to an emergency? Who will provide updates and further information?</p> <p>Who will communicate with key suppliers? What spending authority does that person have to make decisions?</p> <p>Who will respond to media inquiries, and is authorized to speak to the media?</p> <p>Who declares the emergency has been resolved?</p> <p>Will communication duties persist during the recovery to follow-up communications?</p>
What	<p>What communications tools do we have available to us? How will they be used?</p> <p>What tools will be available or fail in different scenarios (e.g., email may be available in the event of a pandemic but perhaps not in a power failure)?</p> <p>What pre-written or prepared scripts are needed (if any)?</p> <p>What key messages need to be communicated to each party?</p> <p>What responsibilities do residents have (versus the corporation), and how do we communicate that?</p> <p>What preparations have we already encouraged people to use (e.g., packing a bag, 3 days of water and food)?</p>
When	<p>When (and under whose authority) can the emergency plan be activated?</p> <p>When (and how) will residents be first alerted, and what instructions do they need?</p> <p>When and how will each party be communicated with?</p> <p>What is the sequence of communications to each stakeholder group (e.g., should residential living unit owners be contacted before commercial owners?)</p>

Where	<p>Where is our muster point, and how do we appropriately describe and communicate it?</p> <p>Where will the condominium board and emergency volunteers meet? Is the location safe?</p> <p>Where are the local shelters located if residents cannot return to the building?</p>
How	<p>How will we communicate with and continually update our owners / occupants during an emergency?</p> <p>How will first responders be communicated with (e.g., walkie-talkies, in person, by phone)?</p>

No doubt there are other questions to be answered in the emergency plan, but the five W's model is useful starting point for assessing communications needs.

Communicating that an Emergency is In Progress

As an emergency begins and starts to unfold, residents need to be made aware of the emergency so they can react appropriately.

Choosing the right communication tool can be a matter of life or death. However, the method of communication often depends on the nature of the emergency and unique factors of the condominium (such as its unique vulnerabilities and features).

Alarm systems can provide a first line of defense but may not be adequate for all individuals in the building (e.g., the hearing impaired). During an emergency, a strong communication tool will:

- Reach all residents that need to be reached;
- Provide instructions to be followed and/or communicate information to the residents when it is needed, for as long as is needed; and
- Have a near-zero failure rate and reliably deliver the information.

Communications techniques to alert residents of an emergency, and communicate during an emergency, might be described in the condominium corporation's Fire Safety Plan, which should be consulted when planning communications and resident notifications.

Common communications techniques include:

- Door to door alerts by volunteers;
- Technology solutions such as automated text messages or other mobile telephone alerts, walkie-talkies, pre-recorded phone calls;

- Other visual methods like flashing lights, fire indication panels, flags;
- Other auditory methods like whistles, public address systems, verbal instructions; and / or
- Combinations of all the above.

While public address systems can be relied upon in some emergencies, it is important to remember that some condominiums do not have these systems, or they do not reach all residents. Additionally, condominium boards should consider that when emergency strikes, there may be no power to the public address system, which may render that technique ineffective. Planning a back-up communication method is important.

A combination of communication methods should be planned to ensure that a range of scenarios, and individuals, can be accommodated within the plan.



When deploying communication tools, the condominium board should remain mindful of the audience, and the urgency of the message being communicated.

For example, it may be less effective to post an urgent message on the community portal, than to send an automated text message.

The Danger of Mass Panic Versus the Danger of Insufficient Information

In any emergency or stressful situation, there is potential for individuals to become overwhelmed and panic. Once panic has set in, it can be difficult to calm individuals and individuals suffering from panic may inadvertently hurt themselves or others.

While panic is always a risk, it is important that residents are alerted to an emerging threat while there is still time to respond. This may mean an occasional ‘false alarm’ however it is usually better to err on the side of safety when declaring an emergency.

Condominium directors and others tasked with emergency response functions may also wish to consider how much information to share with residents during an emergency. Condominium directors can ask themselves:

- Will the information truly help individuals get out of the building faster?
- Will withholding the information make injury or loss of life more or less likely?

- Is this information needed now, or could it be shared after the emergency has stabilized, concluded (e.g., once people have reached safety)?

If the answer to one or more of these questions is yes, it may be best to distribute the information right away.

If the answers are no, it may be best to share this information later after the emergency has been resolved.

Staying Up to Date with Emergency Instructions

Sometimes emergencies are not localized to the condominium corporation. In the event of large events like severe storms, floods, wildfires, or others, it may be most appropriate for the condominium board or condominium manager to track government communications to obtain additional instructions or track the end of the emergency.

To ensure that the condominium receives notification of changing circumstances in a large-scale emergency, it can be useful to:

- Opt-in to large-scale notification systems offered by municipal authorities, provincial government, and federal departments, as well as the relevant emergency management offices for the relevant location; and
- Bookmark websites frequently used to communicate information during emergencies such as these examples below:
 - Environment Canada: click [here](#);
 - Get Prepared Canada: click [here](#);
 - Canadian Hurricane Centre: click [here](#); and
 - Public health websites: Province of Ontario click [here](#) and Government of Canada click [here](#).

C. Test the Plan

Once the draft plan has been developed, it is then important to test the assumptions and the effectiveness of the planned responses. This step can dramatically improve the execution of a plan in a real emergency.

However, there is always temptation to skip testing. Condominium boards often struggle with planning fatigue, lack of time or resources and are tempted to wrap up the plan as soon as there is agreement on its contents. However, *testing the plan* is strongly advised, even if the conditions of the test are not fully representative of the real emergency scenario.

Test Scenarios

Testing a plan can mean testing the entire plan, or a portion of the plan as an *emergency scenario*. It may be more realistic to test certain emergency scenarios (such as fire, or pandemic, or critical equipment failure).

For example: if the plan calls for the shutoff of a water system before evacuating in a certain scenario, this specific responsibility could be tested (e.g., does the assigned person know how to do it? Do they have the right keys or access to the shut-off valves? How quickly can it be done? How do they communicate a problem or that it has been done successfully?).

In general, testing can be done using:

- Tabletop exercises;
- Drills and practice events; and
- Mock disaster events.

Tabletop Exercises

Tabletop testing can be performed if there is no realistic opportunity to engage the community in live testing, for example, while the COVID-19 pandemic is in effect and physical distancing is required. In this situation, a brief testing plan can be developed that outlines:

- The objectives of the test;
- The participants in the test;
- Date and version of plan tested; and
- Brief description of the emergency scenario(s) to be tested, with expected outcomes and challenges.

It can be helpful to design a scenario in which challenges are embedded, such as the emergency plan not being kept in its designated place, or the contact information not being up to date, to ensure that participants are required to ‘think on their feet’. For example, the Carbon Monoxide (CO) detector begins to sound. The security guard goes to check the CO monitoring system but does not see any issues. They go to check the emergency procedures, but the book is missing. What do they do now?

The group should then plan one or more meetings in which the emergency scenario occurs. It is important that each role outlined in the plan (including residents) is covered. A step-by-step discussion can take place in which each participant role plays and responds live to the scenario.

The more parts of the emergency that can be roleplayed, the better – from declaring an emergency, through to calling an ‘all clear’ when it has been concluded.

Drills and Mock Disaster Events

Depending on the vulnerability of the community to certain hazards (e.g., high-rise fire, wind events, extreme heat or cold), it may be advisable to design a drill or mock emergency scenario that will more realistically test how effectively an evacuation or other emergency response is handled in the condominium.

Condominiums must hold fire drills, as outlined in section 2.8.3.1. (1) of the Fire Code, which, at a minimum, can take the form of testing the fire alarms [required on a monthly basis as per section 6.3.2.2 (1) of the Fire Code].

Drills may also be held to test the emergency plan in a more rigorous way. Drills can usually be organized quickly and performed with some advance planning. The process to design a drill should follow the process above, in which a specific scenario is designed and tested. The implementation of any drill should be communicated in advance to residents and others that are involved, so that preparations can be made.

Mock disasters are rarely performed by individual condominiums; however, it is possible if there is a desire to test the plan comprehensively. Mock disasters may also be done in coordination and consultation with the fire department or police department, and typically involve larger numbers of residents and emergency responders.

Debriefing a Test Exercise

Regardless of how the testing was performed, once the emergency scenario exercise has been concluded, it is important to hold a debrief with all participants to discuss how the testing went. This discussion is an excellent opportunity for participants to share their thoughts, identify and transparently discuss any issues or challenges that arose during the activity. Important things to look for:

- Was it clear what happened and what all parties should do? If not, were there any parties that need specific information or training?
- Did participants understand and step into their assigned roles quickly? Was there confusion about who should do what?
- How effective were resident communications?
- Were there any critical steps or procedures missed?
- Did anything not make sense or contradict another part of the plan? In what way exactly?
- How effectively was the emergency managed and resolved?

Inevitably, there will be improvements identified. The debrief discussion could become emotional, as these simulation exercises can be distressing for some people. Condominium directors should consider how best to support participants and allow them the appropriate space and respect to share their feelings or concerns.

Post-event Discussions for Real-Life Emergencies

In some cases, a real-life emergency has already materialized – either with or without the benefit of an emergency plan.

Condominium boards and condominium managers should keep track of all emergencies and near-miss emergencies to identify possible patterns and ensure that the emergency plan is sufficient for those scenarios.

Additionally, condominium boards and condominium managers should take the opportunity to learn from all real-life emergencies in an effort to understand how effectively the plan was executed and capture any learnings.

After an emergency event has occurred, condominium boards should meet later (when it is safe) to review the situation and how it was handled. Special attention should be paid to:

- Precipitating factors;
- Activation of the plan and response to the emergency;
- Use and effectiveness of emergency procedures for that emergency;
- Use and effectiveness of communications tools and protocols;
- Lessons learned; and
- Training or follow-up required.

Adjusting the Plan

The testing and debriefing process usually reveals unforeseen difficulties or contradictions in executing the plan that weren't immediately obvious when planning on paper. Any discoveries of problems with the plan should be addressed, and the plan should be updated.

If the testing and debriefing process identified significant challenges, it may be advisable to re-test the plan or that scenario after it has been sufficiently improved and revised.

Approving and Storing the Plan

Once tested and revised as needed, emergency plans should be approved by the condominium board.

Plans should be stored in a location that is compliant with section 13.2 of O. Reg 48/01, but which is also accessible to all condominium directors, condominium managers, and support staff, where it is unlikely to be moved, destroyed, or forgotten (or when storing digitally, erased).

Condominium directors and condominium managers should be informed as to where the plan is stored. Training for condominium directors and on-site staff should include a briefing on the plan, and reminders about its location in accordance with the condominium corporation's Fire Safety Plan, and section 2.8.2.1 of the Fire code.

D. Communicate the Plan

It is assumed that all condominium directors and any on-site condominium manager will have been fully involved in the development and testing of the emergency plan.

However, even for these groups, the job is not done once the plan has been developed.

While the planning process may result in the best of intention and well-considered plans, a plan is not effective if individuals do not have insight into what it contains, and what is expected of them in an emergency.

Communicating the existence and contents of the plan is the next step in emergency planning and preparedness. There are several ways to communicate the emergency plan, which will probably differ by stakeholder groups to be engaged. These include:

- Owners / Occupants;
- Condominium board and personnel (including condominium manager and any on-site services such as cleaners, building maintenance, security services);
- Emergency responders; and
- Key emergency suppliers.

Owners / Occupants

The condominium board has an obligation to distribute instructions and certain components of the emergency plan to owners / occupants and make efforts to

communicate the contents effectively. A range of communications techniques should be considered, including:

- Distribution by email and / or mail;
- Posting notices about the emergency plan's location on community bulletin boards;
- Posting notices and links to the condominium's emergency plan on the community portal;
- Hosting an information session(s) to present the plan including evacuation routes, expectations of residents and any testing to be performed;
- Regular reminders and articles in the community's newsletter; and
- Social media messages and reminders.

Condominium Board and Personnel (including Third Party Support Services)

In the event of real emergency, condominium directors and personnel working on-site may play a key role in implementing the plan. It is important that they are fully aware of the plan, and clear on their roles and responsibilities.

A range of communications techniques should be considered, including:

- Formal training on the emergency plan;
- Hosting an information session(s) with staff to present the plan, including evacuation routes, expectations of residents and any testing to be performed;
- Email distribution of the plan, highlighting their unique role and responsibilities by email;
- Posting notices about the emergency plan's location on staff bulletin boards and / or in staff break rooms;
- Posting notices and links to the emergency plan on the condominium management's portal;
- Engaging head offices of third-party suppliers (e.g., security services companies) to assist in communicating and reminder staff of the plan and protocols; and
- Social media messages and reminders.

Emergency Responders

It may be helpful to engage key emergency responders (e.g., Fire Department) in the planning process as it evolves.

Condominium boards should also communicate the existence of the emergency plan to those responders and include a copy of the plan in the location where the Fire Safety Plan is kept.

Fire Marshalls and other emergency responders are typically supportive of opportunities to discuss preparedness and planning for emergencies. It may be useful to invite them to attend community information meetings to discuss the plan and assist residents in preparing for emergencies.

Key Emergency Suppliers

Any changes or additions to the emergency plan that could impact key suppliers will need to be discussed. Ideally, a meeting with each one would be held to review and discuss the plan. Email communication of relevant sections of the plan (e.g., updates to the Site Plan) should also be done.

However, condominium boards and condominium managers should not rely on suppliers to understand the emergency plan. Directors and on-site personnel must be fully knowledgeable about the contents of the plan, and able to provide suppliers with instructions.

Obtaining community feedback and input

Sometimes after an emergency, the condominium board may wish to obtain community feedback and input into what has happened and the solution that was used to address an emergency.

In an input session after an emergency, tensions may be high, and people may express themselves emotionally. In order to ensure that community feedback after an emergency is collected in an effective, orderly, and respectful fashion, a few tips can be kept in mind:

- **Plan ahead** — Decide what topics will be covered during any input sessions and set goals. It is most effective to communicate on one topic at a time, rather than hosting an open discussion on many topics at once.
- **Be kind!** — When communicating verbally or in writing, the feedback collected is more likely to be useful if all participants act with empathy and interpret each other's statements charitably. Remember that wording, tone, and body language is important in communicating empathy.
- **Focus on reach and quality of input** — Distribute notices that input is being collected in a way that is effective and accessible for the community. This means considering the needs of residents (language skills, age, etc.)

and selecting the right forum for input and the right tool to notify residents. Typically, the tool with the highest reach is digital displays in elevators – they are highly likely to be seen when residents are otherwise not distracted. However, letters, posters in common areas, or even door-to-door communication can be effective.

E. Monitoring and Evaluating

While emergencies can arise at any time, in hindsight, many emergencies might have been lesser issues that were not addressed effectively or in a timely manner.

Sometimes indications arise about issues already known to the condominium may escalate to a severe situation or emergency. These are signals that can be detected in advance. This can be the case for emergencies, such as some internal situations, extreme weather events or planned civic disturbances.

Sensing and monitoring of the external environment can be done in several ways to ensure that the community is as prepared as possible for emergency events.

Ongoing monitoring of the external – and internal – environment should be performed.

Internal Monitoring

For hazards arising from internal causes such as structural weakness or major system failure, there may be no warning that an emergency will occur.

However, there may be signs that a known issue could escalate to an emergency. It is important to review internal hazards and community vulnerability to identify any issues that could become more urgent – and then act on the most important of them quickly.

Condominium directors and condominium managers should pay special attention to privately engaged building inspectors, engineers, or architects, who may provide comments in written reports (e.g., reserve fund studies) or verbally, which should alert the condominium board that issues are arising (and may precipitate possible emergencies).

Similarly, a good source of information is informal or formal complaints from residents (such as about significant water leaks, cracks in concrete foundations or uneven floors that may mean structural integrity is weakening).

External Monitoring

Monitoring for changes to the condominium corporation's external and internal hazards are activities that can be done on an ongoing basis. While many condominium directors may read the newspaper or watch weather updates and reflect on how an upcoming weather event may impact their daily commute, they may not readily think about how the event could impact the condominium, and what preparations should be done.

Any advanced notice before an emergency will provide critical extra time for the condominium board and community to prepare for upcoming events. For that reason, the condominium board may wish to consider assigning responsibility to a condominium director or another individual to monitor the external environment for changes that could impact the community's safety or opportunity to prepare.

For example, a condominium director could be assigned to monitor the local news media and weather channels for signals that hazards are becoming more likely or more severe, such as:

- *Significant weather events* such as winter storms, heat waves, or tornados that are worsening, or persisting longer than expected;
- *Forest fires* that are growing in intensity and / or moving toward the condominium, which may increase risk to the community;
- *Power outages or water shortages* that are not resolved within a reasonably short time (e.g., 24 to 36 hours); and
- *Civic disturbances* such as protests taking place at locations nearby the condominium and appear to be growing violent.

There are numerous reliable websites, television channels, radio broadcasts, and emergency alert systems that can be helpful in determining if an emergency is imminent.

The person assigned this responsibility should check sources every few days to determine if any active warnings have been published by government for the area of the condominium. Sources might include:

- Local TV and Radio News broadcasts;
- Emergency Management Ontario Website, click [here](#);
- Environment Canada, click [here](#);
- Alert Ready Emergency Alerts, click [here](#); and
- Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre, click [here](#).

The assigned person should report to the board as quickly as possible to alert them of the changing situation and provide backup documentation.

Improving the Plan

A good way to improve the emergency plan over time is to capture and incorporate 'lessons learned' after an emergency or near-miss emergency has materialized. This can be used to amend and strengthen the plan in case of a future recurrence.

Typically, lessons learned are new pieces of knowledge that have been gained from the process of responding to a now-resolved emergency. It can involve:

- Debriefing on the recent emergency to understand what worked well, and what should be improved;
- Documentation of themes in a clear and organized central place;
- Analysis of themes to determine what could be done better next time;
- Storage of lessons learned in a commonly accessible place for the relevant emergency planning personnel; and
- Retrieval of lessons learned for refreshing the plan in the future.

Refreshing the plan

Regardless of whether an emergency has happened, it is a good practice to review existing emergency plans at least once a year. A formal refresh process should be performed, during which directors may ask:

- **Have any emergency events materialized since the plan was developed?**
 - Were they anticipated or surprise events?
 - How were those events handled?
 - Did we perform a debrief? Why or why not?
 - What lessons learned should influence our plans?
- **How have our community's vulnerabilities changed since the plan was developed, in terms of:**
 - Have we replaced any major equipment recently?
 - Has an inspection been performed recently, and did it identify any issues? Examples might include informal observations by the condominium corporation's engineers or maintenance workers, or more formal inspections performed upon request by external consultants as a result of an issue arising or observed deficiency.
 - Have we suffered any major failures or have new vulnerabilities arisen?
 - Have any major changes in the community occurred?
 - Individuals with special needs who may have moved in or out
 - What about who needs special help in the event of emergency? Have their needs changed?

- **How have the emergency roles and responsibilities changed since the plan was developed?**
 - Do we have the same condominium manager? Staff?
 - Are the same condominium directors on the condominium board?
 - Are the same volunteers still living in the community and do they still wish to be assigned roles?
 - Are the right people still assigned the right responsibilities in the plan?
 - What refresher training or information do they need to do their role and responsibilities?
- **How have our suppliers and / or supply arrangements changed since the plan was developed?**
 - Are suppliers still in business?
 - Does the condominium corporation have any new supply arrangements that should be included?
 - Are we satisfied with the responsiveness and quality of those suppliers? Do we have backups for each?
- **How has the condominium's communications capability changed since the plan was developed?**
 - Have we implemented or changed anything related to communications with residents?
 - Does the condominium corporation still have access to any tools identified in the plan?
 - Do we have up to date contact information for all owners / occupants? Do we have up to date contact information for all responders, and suppliers including back-ups?
- **Have any laws or regulations changed that require the plan to address different topics, or require any operational changes?**

Once condominium directors have identified which factors might decrease the effectiveness of the plan or create barriers to its implementation, the plan should be updated, re-tested, and re-approved by the board.

Part 3: Recovering from an Emergency or Crisis

Return to Normal

Communicating the Emergency is Over

One of the most commonly forgotten aspects of emergency communication, is that an emergency has been concluded. This is often called an 'all-clear' notification, which is usually done by the relevant authority on the scene (e.g., Fire Chief).

Once an 'all clear' has been called, the condominium board and condominium manager should work quickly to inform all residents that the emergency is over.

Multiple communication channels can be employed such as:

- Verbal communication at the muster point;
- Message over public address system;
- Mass text-messages or automated phone calls;
- By email and posting on the community portal; and
- If no evacuation was required, door to door in-person notification.

Where possible, multiple forms of communication should be used so that there is no delay in receiving communication that the emergency is over.

Allowing People to Return to the Building

In an emergency scenario that involves emergency responders (e.g., Fire Department, Police), guidance from those organizations should take priority about how, when and if to return to the building.

Resident safety is the first priority in the event of an emergency. Some residents may panic and attempt to re-enter the building during an ongoing emergency to save pets, property or other people.

If anybody is observed re-entering before it is safe to do so, the relevant authority should be notified so that they can effectively manage rescues and building security.

Resuming Normal Business Operations

After an emergency, residents will want to return to their homes, and commercial tenants will be eager to resume business.

During the return to business operations, the condominium board may wish to schedule special meetings alongside its normal schedule for debriefs, resident outreach, or other purposes.

The condominium may have a separate business continuity and disaster recovery plan which may be activated at this point.

Monitoring for Recurrence / Change

Some emergencies may involve monitoring after the fact (e.g., monitoring of a structural repair) to ensure that the emergency has been effectively resolved and does not reoccur.

The condominium board may wish to consider assigning responsibilities to management or members of the condominium board for monitoring tasks. This could mean procuring additional building inspections, surveying the site, or other monitoring tasks. In general, monitoring should:

- Have a defined set of activities;
- Have a defined process for reporting findings to the board;
- Have a defined schedule; and
- Have a defined set of procedures if evidence of reoccurrence is observed.

Assessing the Potential Damages and Making Claims

Condominium corporations are required by section 99 of the Condo Act to obtain and maintain insurance for damage to the units and common elements caused by major perils. Processes and procedures outlined by the insurer should be followed to assess potential damage. In general, the following steps can be taken.

Initial Assessment of Damages

The Emergency Coordinator (or other assigned party) should work with emergency services, inspectors, and insurance adjustors to assess damage. While some damage will not be discovered for some time, assessing damage immediately after it is safe to do so can ensure that damages are not missed or mistaken for pre-existing damage.

Documenting Potential Damages

The Emergency Coordinator (or other assigned party) should take steps to document with video, photos and documentation the nature of any damage. Before doing so, condominium directors should contact the condominium corporation's insurer to determine what format is best for documenting different types of damage. Any photographs and descriptions documenting damage should be stored in a common location accessible to the condominium board and / or condominium manager.

Condominium directors may be doubly impacted as their homes may also have been potentially damaged.

It is challenging but necessary for condominium directors to separate the impact to their own homes and property, from the damage to the condominium and their responsibility as condominium directors..

Personal Impacts

Emergencies can be frightening for residents. Emergencies can result in short and long-term physical injuries and, in some cases, cause long-lasting mental trauma. As community leaders, condominium directors should aid in locating resources for individuals who have suffered either physical or mental injury. This could include:

- Displaying relevant materials in common areas that provide contact information for physical and mental health services for children, adults, and families;
- Providing spaces for relaxation in common areas with designated quiet areas or times; and / or
- Reminding residents to be patient and encouraging them to behave empathetically towards their condominium neighbours.

Getting Help if You Need It

After an emergency, some tensions may arise in the community. It is an emotional and frightening time, and for some there may be ongoing challenges as a result of the emergency. Some residents may lay blame on others or express anger due to injury, loss of property or loss of life. There may be unresolved liability issues that constrain what can be said, and to whom, or lead to fingerpointing between owners.

If help is needed, the condominium board may wish to engage a relevant professional(s) for advice or to support residents. The professionals required will vary by the situation however condominium boards may wish to consider how credentialled professionals (such as grief counsellors) could assist in the debrief and recovery process.

Appendix 1: Director’s Checklist

Basic Activities for Emergency Planning and Preparedness

The following checklist corresponds with the high-level emergency planning process outlined in Figure 1.

Recognizing that some condominium corporations may not have the capacity or resources to perform detailed emergency planning, there are a few key steps that should be considered minimum or basic levels of planning and preparedness:

Basics of Emergency Planning and Preparedness	
A – Assess Vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Perform high-level vulnerability assessment: <input type="checkbox"/> Residential / commercial mix <input type="checkbox"/> Occupants with special needs <input type="checkbox"/> Physical vulnerabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Identify and select key emergencies (e.g., high risk, high likelihood) that the condominium will plan a response for <input type="checkbox"/> Document residents with special needs and the supports they require <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain off-site backups for corporation’s records (digital), ideally following 3-2-1 approach (see p. 21) and complying with the Condo Act and regulations
B – Develop Emergency Plan(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure actions required by law are taken: <input type="checkbox"/> Fire safety plans if required by the Fire Code <input type="checkbox"/> Purchase insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Obtain inspections <input type="checkbox"/> Draft and socialize emergency plans for high-risk hazards, which should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Site plan <input type="checkbox"/> Evacuation plan <input type="checkbox"/> Muster point <input type="checkbox"/> Standard Operating Procedures for directors and key on-site personnel (if any, such as condominium manager and security staff) <input type="checkbox"/> Assign key roles and emergency tasks:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Emergency Coordinator role ❑ Wardens / Floor Wardens (if required by Fire Safety Plan) ❑ Others as necessary, based on the draft plan. ❑ Document emergency contact information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Emergency responders ❑ Condominium Board and personnel ❑ Owner / occupants ❑ Suppliers and back-up suppliers ❑ Confirm communications protocol for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alerting owners / occupants of emergency ○ Providing ongoing communications updates ○ Sending 'all clear' notification that emergency has been resolved.
C – Test the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Perform fire drills / fire alarming testing / test evacuations ❑ Review and align with existing safety plans (e.g., Fire Safety Plan) ❑ Update / adjust draft emergency plan as required ❑ Finalize / approve emergency plan and store in accessible location
D – Communicate the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Review communications needs and identify strategies to notify residents about the emergency plan. ❑ Implement basic communications strategies, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Print and distribute emergency plan to residents (must avoid disclosure of personal or confidential information about specific owners and/or residents) ❑ Put up posters and / or other visual items to communicate muster point and / or evacuation procedures ❑ Posting information and updates to the condominium's social media groups / pages ❑ Post on community portal (if one exists)
E – Monitor and Evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Assign hazard / risk monitoring activities to one director or other individual ❑ Perform yearly refresh of emergency plan and adjust as needed.

Advanced Activities for Emergency Planning and Preparedness

For condominium corporations that have fully implemented the above list of basic emergency planning and preparedness measures, there may be a desire to add more detail and / or increase preparedness.

A number of advanced activities may be added as outlined in the table below:

Advanced Activities for Emergency Planning and Preparedness	
A – Assess Vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> ALL of the basic activities listed above, AND: <input type="checkbox"/> Identify universe of potential hazards, including low-risk hazards <input type="checkbox"/> Perform formal risk assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Design risk assessment scales to assist in prioritizing risks
B – Develop Emergency Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> ALL of the basic activities listed above, AND: <input type="checkbox"/> Consider developing a special emergency planning committee <input type="checkbox"/> Develop emergency plans for low-risk hazards <input type="checkbox"/> Identify and acquire other emergency equipment (e.g., back-up generators), tools, supplies <input type="checkbox"/> Assign an “owner” of the emergency plan to a director or condominium manager
C – Test the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> ALL of the basic activities listed above, AND: <input type="checkbox"/> Develop test scenarios to assist in testing the plan(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a testing strategy, which might include tabletop testing, as well as fire drills or mock disaster events <input type="checkbox"/> Perform post-testing debrief <input type="checkbox"/> Update and adjust the plan as required
D – Communicate the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> ALL of the basic activities listed above, AND: <input type="checkbox"/> Host community information session and gather input

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Periodic updates and communications about emergency planning and preparedness
<p>E – Monitor and Evaluate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ ALL of the basic activities listed above, AND: □ Quarterly refresh of emergency plans performed □ Opt-in to large-scale emergency notification systems □ Obtain text messaging capability to allow for SMS-based notifications