

FIRE SAFETY

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INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this fire policy is to ensure the following:

- (1) Fires are prevented.—See *Safety Outlines* (DC-80) G3: “How to Prevent Fires.”
- (2) If a fire occurs, everyone is evacuated, no one is put in danger, and, if possible, the fire is quickly extinguished.
- (3) Everyone who has a role in a fire emergency knows what to do and how. (Each role is explained in detail below.)

2. We take the risks associated with fire seriously because of the sacredness of life. All residential areas must have fire/smoke/heat detection and good fire compartmentation. Fire alarm points must be regularly tested and well-maintained, as must any fire-fighting equipment.

3. Certain matters discussed in this document may not apply in the branch territory because of local circumstances or regulations. In some cases, the evacuation and fire alarm roles as described in this document may be merged. These guidelines may be adapted as needed while keeping in mind the high importance of safety.

CAUSES OF FIRE

4. Diligent care is needed to address all the causes of fires but especially the main causes in Bethel’s operations as follows:

5. **Cooking and Flames:** Cooking equipment should not be left unattended when it is on. This includes microwaves, ovens, and stove tops. Care must be taken to avoid overheating oil.—See *Safety Outlines* (DC-80) G3: “How to Prevent Fires.”

6. The use of open flames, such as candles, in rooms is best avoided. If used they must never be left unattended, must be in well-designed and stable holders that do not conduct heat to combustible materials, and must be kept away from soft furnishings.

7. **Electrical:** Overloaded or aging electrical installations can overheat and result in a fire. Electrical installations are to be inspected at least every five years to check the load on them and the condition and suitability of the wiring. Substations and main switchboards should be inspected every year. Do not overload circuits. Any charring or smells of overheating must be reported and the equipment taken out of use.—See *Safety Outlines G2: “Working With Batteries Safely.”*

8. Defective appliances can cause fire. All appliances must be checked annually by the primary user for signs of malfunction. All new appliances must be reviewed by the maintenance department before they are put into use, if they have not been tested and approved by local authorities for use in that country. This will ensure that new installations are part of the maintenance program, which should include electrical testing of portable electrical appliances.

9. **Hot Work:** Hot work such as welding, soldering, or grinding (creating sparks) can be done around the premises only after receiving a work permit in accordance with strict hot-work conditions. The post-work cooldown period must be observed.—See *Safety Outlines G9: “Hot Work Operations.”*

10. **Flammable Liquids:** Use of highly flammable liquids should be avoided wherever possible. They should be replaced with less-flammable liquid. Flammable liquids and gases should be stored only in approved fireproof storage areas, in suitable containers, and in the minimum quantities required. The storage areas must be well-ventilated, with no nearby drains in which gases could collect. Decanting of flammable liquids should take place only in the flammable-liquid storage area, and metal containers must be grounded as pouring takes place. Dirty rags soiled with oil or flammable liquid should be put in metal bins that have lids and be processed daily. Suitable flammable-liquid spill kits and extinguishers should be available in each department where flammable liquids are stored. No open flames or vehicles are allowed near the flammable-liquid storage areas or in the departments where flammable liquids are in use.—See *Safety Outlines G4: “Confined Space Safety”* and *G5: “Safe Handling of Compressed Gases.”*

11. **Arson:** Storage of combustible materials (such as wooden or plastic pallets or plastic refuse bins) outside the building should be eliminated or minimized. If such storage is necessary, these materials should be secured away from the building so that they cannot be moved up to the building and set on fire. Consideration should be given to locking refuse bins if there is any public access to the area.

IN THE EVENT OF FIRE OR FIRE ALARM

12. If the fire alarms sound, the organizational structure outlined below immediately goes into effect. Depending upon the circumstances, occupancy of the building, size or location of the branch facilities, and legal requirements, modifications to this program may be made. Based upon the location of the fire alarm, portions or all of the building and adjacent buildings might require evacuation, as specified in the approved fire plan.

13. **The Incident Controller:** Each building will have a number of pre-appointed potential incident controllers. The first one to arrive at the command post (the reception area, if it is not affected by the fire) will assume that role. The incident controller acts as coordinator and decision maker. He coordinates the functions of all the teams until the fire brigade/department arrives (if they are summoned) and takes charge.

14. On hearing the alarm, the priorities of the incident controller are as follows:

- (1) Ensure that everyone gets out of the building or alarm zone safely and is accounted for and positioned at a predetermined signed safe evacuation point. Each building will have its own procedures for doing this. Assisted living facilities will have specialized evacuation procedures.
- (2) Call the fire brigade/department immediately if a fire is confirmed or suspected.
- (3) Act as a focal point for all communication and decisions until the fire brigade/department arrives. The incident controller or his deputies will remain by the telephones in the reception area until the evacuation is complete.
- (4) Authorize reentry of the building only if the initial response team has confirmed that there is no fire and if the evacuation of the building or section is complete and therefore able to count as a fire drill.
- (5) Take any safe measures to minimize fire damage, such as moving flammable or explosive objects away from the fire or disconnecting electrical services and equipment. Any measures taken must not put those completing the task at risk.
- (6) Direct security personnel to ensure the security of the building and to manage traffic.
- (7) Complete the *Incident Report* (TO-5), noting the evacuation time and any problems encountered, and send the completed report to the Branch Committee. Log a copy of the completed report on-site. Include a record of the fire alarm and the emergency response.

15. The incident controller has complete oversight of the incident until the fire brigade/department arrives, after which he will assist them with anything they require. For example, they may insist on the evacuation of adjacent buildings outside of the fire zone.

16. **The Initial Response Team:** On hearing the alarm, the role of the preappointed and trained initial response team is to:

- Determine whether there is a fire in the alarm zone or not.
- Communicate this information to the incident controller at the reception area as soon as possible.
- Fight the fire using fire extinguishers if it is in its initial stages, is not producing dark smoke in a confined space, is not creating other hazardous/explosive/toxic risks in the fire area, and if it is otherwise appropriate to do so. Otherwise, they can seek to contain the fire by closing windows and doors around it if it is safe to do so. The initial response team must not risk their lives or health to save buildings.—See *Safety Outlines* (DC-80) G6: “Using Portable Fire Extinguishers” and G8: “Responding to Smoke Detectors, Building Fire Alarms, or Fires.”

17. Various members of the team contribute the following training and skills:

- The use of fire extinguishers and first-response firefighting techniques.
- A detailed knowledge of the building and its services available to the incident controller or the fire brigade/department when making decisions about how to put out the fire.

18. **The Fire Wardens:** Each fire warden is responsible for a specific area of the building. The Branch Committee will approve the list of areas where a fire warden is assigned. Although the fire warden structure is mainly applicable to office buildings, consideration should also be made to addressing the needs or arrangements necessary to ensure prompt and complete evacuation from residential buildings during working and non-working hours.

19. On hearing the alarm, the fire warden is responsible for ensuring that each section of the building he has been assigned has been checked on his route out of the building, including any of-

fices, restrooms, or other rooms. He will instruct any remaining persons to leave by means of the closest and safest evacuation route, assisting them if necessary. If they are unable to evacuate, an attempt should be made to move them to the safest available intermediate point or as per their training. If the person cannot be moved, he will make the person safe by closing (though not locking) windows and doors and will request help through the incident controller. There should be sufficient fire wardens in the building to enable them to do their checks quickly as they leave the building. Once an area has been evacuated, the fire warden should communicate this to the incident controller.

20. During evacuation, the fire warden should use caution when opening doors. For example, he should check the temperature of the door handle with the back of his hand and open it carefully to check for fire or smoke. The fire wardens should also ensure that elevators are not used during an evacuation unless specifically approved by the fire plan.

21. Every day, wardens will perform the following checks in their areas:

- (1) Fire doors should not be left open, since this would allow the free passage of smoke around the building in the event of a fire.
- (2) Fire routes and doors should be free of obstructions.
- (3) Chemicals, paper, and equipment should be stored properly and in a safe condition.— See *Safety Outlines* G8: “Responding to Smoke Detectors, Building Fire Alarms, or Fires.”

22. **The First-Aid Team:** On hearing the alarm, members of the first-aid team will retrieve the nearest first-aid kit, if possible, before exiting the building. After checking out, they will make themselves available to the incident controller in case someone is injured. In some branches, this group might be trained to the level of Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT).—See *Safety Outlines* A6: “What to Do in a Medical Emergency,” G6: “Using Portable Fire Extinguishers,” and G8: “Responding to Smoke Detectors, Building Fire Alarms, or Fires.”

23. **Tour Guides:** On hearing either the continuous fire alarm or the pulsed alarm, tour guides will direct their tour groups out through the nearest exit. Congregation bus tour groups can assemble in their bus, where the congregation’s tour organizer can check his list to make sure everyone is accounted for and can advise the incident controller accordingly. Security personnel will determine when the bus can safely move off the premises, taking pedestrians and fire engines into account. Visitors not in a bus group should follow their tour guide or host to the assembly point.

24. **Checkers:** A checker is assigned in each department to verify that those in his department are accounted for at the assembly point. This information should be communicated to the incident controller.

REHEARSING THE FIRE POLICY

25. The fire policy for each building should be rehearsed until it works well and results in a complete evacuation within the time limit determined by the branch for that building, usually less than four minutes. After this, it should be rehearsed once or twice a year unless the evacuation time goes over four minutes. (Any alarm, whatever the cause, can count as a rehearsal, or fire drill, as long as the whole evacuation procedure is completed and the incident is timed.) An adjusted schedule for rehearsing the evacuation of those in assisted living facilities may need to be created.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

26. **Training:** Training sheets should be created for each role and adapted to the needs of each building. Each person having a fire role should keep his training sheets in a readily accessible place along with any other related records so he can carry out his duties at any time.

27. All new members must have the fire evacuation procedure explained to them in orientation training during their first week at Bethel. A summary of the procedures for discovery of a fire and evacuation should be placed at convenient locations within each department.

28. **Telephones:** During a fire, telephone calls may continue to come in at their usual rate, but these must not prevent vital calls in connection with the fire from getting through to the reception desk. If the switchboard operators are not affected by the evacuation, they should tell any unrelated caller: "I am sorry, we have a fire drill. Please call back in one hour," and should then disconnect the call.

29. The reception desk telephone will be at the disposal of the incident controller for emergency calls from the wardens, initial response team, and so forth. All should evacuate the building immediately rather than try to call the emergency number to ask whether there is a real fire or not. If an occupant needs assistance or is aware of one who needs assistance, he should attempt to contact a fire warden or call an approved number. It may be beneficial to have a second phone that could be staffed during an emergency for situations such as this, without tying up the main incident controller line.

30. **Records and Money:** The Accounting Department, Service Department, Legal Department, Computer Department, and other departments where key records are kept should have their own procedures for securing records and money in the event of a fire alarm, but these procedures must not risk life or safety or cause workers to take more than four minutes to evacuate the building.

MONITORING AND UPDATING THE FIRE POLICY

31. The success of the fire policy should be monitored in accordance with the information gathered from the *Incident Report* (TO-5) forms, and if problems become apparent, the responsible department will report these to the Branch Committee member responsible for fire safety. All names of fire personnel should be updated by the responsible department at the end of each calendar month and the updated lists should be circulated.