



**Fire Safety Program
11/08/2023**

**Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management
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Edinburg, Texas 78539
(956) 665-3690**

**Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management
One West University Drive
Brownsville, Texas 78520
(956) 882-5934**

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Background

The University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management (EHSRM) has developed these Fire Safety Policies and Procedures to reflect the policies and guidelines of the Fire Safety Program. It is the intent of the Fire Safety Program to establish uniform procedures for staff, faculty, and students and guests to prevent fires from occurring and to conduct the proper emergency procedures in the event that one does. These guidelines comply with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Fire Code 1, Life Safety Code 101, and the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Responsibilities

The UTRGV Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management (EHSRM)

The UTRGV EHSRM is the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) and acts as the liaison between the local fire department and the campus community. EHSRM oversees the fire protection program and maintains an active database for inspection of fire extinguishers, fire alarm systems and other fire safety related equipment on campus. EHSRM conducts code compliance inspections at all academic, administrative and housing facilities. EHSRM coordinates the fire safety program and provides training and information to the University community as needed.

The designated Fire Marshal for UTRGV is:

Saul Jauregui
Program Manager
Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
(956) 665 -3690

The designated EHSRM representative for UTRGV Brownsville Campus is:

Robert Gilchrist
Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
(956) 882 -5934

Local Fire Departments

Each campus has a local fire department, which responds to all alarms on campus, and are active in the evaluation of code compliance and access to the university campus. Once a fire alarm is initiated, it is confirmed by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Police Department (UTRGV PD) and the local fire department is contacted. The Fire Department personnel are the only entity that can give the approval to reset a fire alarm system once the fire department responds to campus.

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Police Department (UTRGV PD)

The UTRGV Police Department responds to all fire alarms on campus. Their primary responsibility is to assess the potential fire and make the appropriate communications necessary to notify emergency personnel. Secondly, they secure the area of any immediate hazard and act as a liaison between the local fire department and the campus community when an alarm occurs on campus. The UTRGV PD also resets all fire alarm systems after the UTRGV PD or Fire Department has cleared the building.

Evacuation Assistants

Evacuation assistants are assigned by department heads. Evacuation assistants are trained by EHSRM in recognizing fire safety hazards, fire evacuation procedures, building safety, and fire extinguisher use. Training is valid for three years.

The UTRGV Academic Support Facility – Physical Plant

The UTRGV Academic Support Facilities Department will assist in providing access to buildings or may provide substitute space for individuals whose office, lab, classroom, etc. has been damaged by fire.

The UTRGV Housing Department

The UTRGV Housing Department will assist in providing access to housing facilities and substitute housing for any student living in university owned housing whose on-campus residency is damaged due to fire.

The UTRGV Dean of Students or Office of Student Life

The UTRGV Dean of Students or Office of Student Life may assist in locating substitute housing for any on-campus student, including fraternity or sorority members, whose space is damaged by fire.

Contractors

It is the responsibility of outside contractors working in university buildings or on the UTRGV property to provide adequate fire protection to workers on the job site. It is also the responsibility of contractors to train their employees to evacuate the building safely during a fire alarm. Contractors working on fire alarm systems connected to The UTRGV fire alarm system must contact EHSRM at Edinburg 665- 3690, Brownsville 882-5934, prior to performing any work on that building's fire alarm system. It is also the responsibility of contractors working on the UTRGV campus to contact EHSRM if they will be doing any work which could potentially set off the fire alarm system.

Equipment and Inspections

Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems, Standpipes, and Fire Pumps

There are 71 UTRGV buildings which have wet sprinkler systems.

Inspections

Management of the University's Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems, Standpipes and Fire Pumps is performed by the EHSRM. All water-based fire protection systems in university owned buildings are inspected and tested annually according to NFPA 25 guidelines by a licensed contractor who also provides emergency repair service twenty-four hours a day. Inspections of these systems can be weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually based upon the equipment under consideration. The weekly inspection and testing includes, but is not limited to, churn tests of fire pumps and inspections of dry system valve houses (during the winter months). The monthly inspection also includes review of all control valves to ensure they are secured in their normal operating positions. Quarterly tests consist of, but are not limited to, flow tests of sprinkler systems, tests of tamper and water flow alarms, inspections of hydraulic data plates, inspections of emergency sprinklers and wrenches, and inspections of all fire department connections. Annually, visual inspections occur throughout each facility, trip tests to dry systems, full flow tests of backflow prevention and flow tests of all fire pumps are performed. EHSRM maintains documentation regarding all these inspections and coordinates contractor activities.

The designated contractor, currently, for the inspection and maintenance of the Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems, Standpipes and Fire Pumps is:

Allied Fire Protection LP

501 Cedar Avenue
McAllen, TX 78504
956- 631-4208
Contact: Ruben de la Cruz

Clean Agent and Dry Chemical Suppression Systems

There are 31 fixed fire suppression systems located in solvent rooms, computer areas, and kitchen vent hoods on the UTRGV Edinburg Campus. These locations can be found in Table-1. Hood Systems, located above fryers and grills and are used for exhausting cooking odors and grease, discharge either wet or dry chemical agent in case one of the fryers or grills should catch on fire.

Inspection

All systems are inspected bi-annually, according to NFPA 17, and NFPA 96

Table 1- Clean Agent and Dry Chemical Suppression System Locations

Edinburg	Building	Location	Use	Rm	System	Pounds
1	Baseball	Stadium	Kitchen	Kitchen	Ansul	Ansul (6 gallons)
2	Baseball	Stadium	Kitchen	Kitchen	Ansul	Ansul (6 gallons)
3	ECCDC	Child Development Center	Kitchen	Kitchen	Rangeguard	2.5 Gallons
4	EHABW	Health Affairs Building West	Kitchen	Dietetics lab	Rangeguard	2.5 Gallons
5	EMEBL	Medical Education Building	Kitchen	1.113	Ansul	Ansul (3 gallon)
6	EMEBL	Medical Education Building	Kitchen	1.113	Ansul	Ansul (3 gallon)
7	ESTUN	Student Union	Kitchen	Kitchen	Ansul	Ansul (6 gallons)
8	ESTUN	Student Union	Kitchen	Chick-Fil-A	Rangeguard	2.5 Gallons
9	ESTUN	Student Union	Kitchen	Chick-Fil-A	Rangeguard	5 Gallons
10	ESTUN	Student Union	Kitchen	Taco Ponchos	Ansul	Ansul (9 gallons)
11	ESTUN	Student Union	Kitchen	Mein bowl	Rangeguard	2.5 Gallons
12	EUCCF	University Cafeteria	Kitchen	Serving Line	Ansul	Ansul(2.5 gallons)
13	EUCCF	University Cafeteria	Kitchen	Kitchen	Ansul	Ansul (6 gallons)
14	EUCCF	University Cafeteria	Kitchen	Kitchen	Ansul	Ansul (2.5 gallons)
15	EASFC	Hazardous Waste Building	Waste	NA	Ansul	BC Powder (50 lb)
16	EASFC	Hazardous Waste Building	Waste	NA	Ansul	BC Powder (50 lb)
17	EACSB	Academic Services Building	Server	1.110	Fenwall	FM-200(79 lb)

	Building	Location	Use	Rm	System	Pounds
18	EACSB	Academic Services Building	Server	1.120	Fenwall	FM-200(66 lb)
19	EACSB	Academic Services Building	Server	2.136	Novec	1230 (136 lb)
20	ECCTR	Computer Center	Server	Vault 1.848	Elke/Cheetah	FM-200 (330 lbs)
21	ECCTR	Computer Center	Server	2.508	Elke/Cheetah	FM-200 (252 lb)
22	ECCTR	Computer Center	Server	Machine Room 2.544	Elke/Cheetah	FM-200 (760 lb)
23	EREBL	Medical Education Building	Server	1.006.5	Fike	FE 227
24	EMSA	Math and Science Academy	Server	104	Fike	FE-125 (600 lb)
25	LIBR	Library	Server	224	FireLight	Inergen (9x45)
Brownsville						
26	Student Union	Student Union	Kitchen	1.32	Ansul	Ansul (6 gallon)
27	Student Union	Student Union	Kitchen	1.32	Ansul	Ansul (3 gallon)
28						
Harlingen						
29	HCEBL	Harlingen RAHC	Server	2.104	Elke/Cheetah	FM - 200
Port Isabel						
30	Ridely	Port Isabel	Boat	Engine compartment	CO2 250	CO2
31	Vollert	Port Isabel	Boat	Engine compartment	CO2 250 CO2	CO2 CO2

Portable Fire Extinguishers

Extinguishers on Campus

Currently, there are approximately 2268 dry chemical and carbon dioxide fire extinguishers on campus. All University owned apartments have fire extinguishers installed in the kitchens, while University owned dormitories have fire extinguishers positioned throughout the hallways. Extinguishers are also in laboratories, hallways, corridors, kitchens, mechanical rooms, laundry areas where irons are used, in

university vehicles and equipment. Fire extinguishers should always be conspicuously located and unobstructed. Contact EHSRM to request a hazard analysis for placement of a fire extinguisher or to request a different size or type extinguisher for your area.

Types of Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are described by the type of fire that they extinguish. Fire ratings can be found on the extinguisher faceplate signifying the type of fire they extinguish.

- a) Type ABC
 - i) Multipurpose extinguisher that can be used on Class A, B, and C fires.
 - ii) Dry chemical extinguisher filled with a yellow powder made up of primarily mono-ammonium phosphate.
 - iii) Pressurized with Nitrogen.
 - iv) Leaves a residue that can harm sensitive electronic equipment.
 - v) Range in size from 2.5 lbs. to 20 lbs.

- b) Type BC
 - i) Can be used on Class B and C fires.
 - ii) Typically found in commercial kitchens.
 - iii) Pressurized with Nitrogen

- c) Type D
 - i) Can be used on Class D fires.
 - ii) Typically found around flammable metals in labs.
 - iii) Work by smothering the fire.

- d) Type CO₂
 - i) Can be used on Class B and C fires.
 - ii) Filled with Carbon Dioxide under pressure.
 - iii) Recognized by the lack of a pressure gauge and presence of a horn.
 - iv) Range in size from 5 to 50 lbs.
 - v) Leave very little residue.
 - vi) Typically found in labs, mechanical rooms, and kitchens.
 - vii) Remember that if damaged, a CO₂ cylinder can become a missile, so handle them with care.

Inspections

EHSRM is responsible for the maintenance and inspection of all portable fire extinguishers in university owned buildings. All portable fire extinguishers in university owned buildings are visually inspected on a monthly basis by a qualified, licensed contractor. Each fire extinguisher is inspected to determine if the seal and pin are intact, the extinguisher gauge indicates the extinguisher is fully pressurized, and that the extinguisher is in place and operational. Any fire extinguisher found missing a seal or pin or with a low charge indicated on the gauge will be replaced. Each portable fire extinguisher is inspected and reviewed to determine if hydrostatic testing, tagging or other preventive maintenance is required. All dry powder chemical fire extinguishers must be internally inspected every six (6) years with either maintenance or recharging or hydrostatic testing and recharging performed, while carbon dioxide fire extinguishers are inspected every five years. A licensed contractor provides preventive maintenance and recharging of all fire extinguishers in university owned buildings. Documentation of annual inspections and monthly inspection is maintained on the fire extinguisher tags.

If an extinguisher is discharged in a university owned building, it is the responsibility of the individual discharging the extinguisher to notify EHSRM immediately at 665-3690 Edinburg, and 882-5934 Brownsville campus, so that the extinguisher can be replaced while recharging and maintenance is being performed. If an extinguisher is discharged in a lab or classroom, it is the responsibility of the classroom instructor to contact EHSRM. Those individuals living on university property must also inform the EHSRM of any discharged fire extinguisher in a timely manner.

Fire Alarm Systems

There are approximately 80 fire alarm systems found in UTRGV buildings. The alarms are monitored by the Central Cooling Plant, UTRGV Police, and a licensed contractor. The cooling plant monitors the alarms and notifies UTRGV Police when an alarm is activated. For buildings not monitored by Cooling Plant, the fire alarm signal is sent directly to UTRGV Police. The protocol for a Fire Alarm on campus is as follows:

- a) The following locations require immediate notification to UTRGV Police and Fire Department and full response by both agencies:
 - i) Resident life facilities
- b) The following locations require immediate notification and full response by both UTRGV Police and Fire Department:
 - i) University Library
 - ii) Laboratories (Science, Biology, Health Science)
 - iii) Child Development Center
- c) All other locations require full response by both UTRGV Police and Fire Department, if occupied; If not, UTRGV Police will respond and check status of the location prior to notifying the Fire Department

The EHSRM must approve any changes, alterations, or additions to any fire alarm system on campus. The EHSRM Fire alarm technicians maintain fire alarm systems in buildings owned by UTRGV. Anyone tampering with or vandalizing fire safety equipment is subject to disciplinary action and/or prosecution.

Inspections

EHSRM Fire alarm technicians oversee the inspection of fire alarm systems. Each fire alarm system is tested annually, per NFPA 72. Residence halls are tested on a semi-annual basis. A Licensed fire alarm technician inventories and tests the system and batteries are checked monthly. Each smoke detector is inspected monthly to determine if it is functional, passes a periodic sensitivity test, is in place, and has not been tampered with. Heat detectors, duct detectors, audiovisual devices, and magnetic door holders are also inspected to confirm they are operational and work correctly. Prior to reopening any building for occupancy on university property, all life safety devices must be inspected, cleaned, and tested by a fire alarm technician to ensure they are in place and have passed a functional and sensitivity test.

The designated individual for the service and maintenance of fire alarms for Hidalgo and Starr County Campuses is:

Julio Cardona,
Supervisor Licensed Fire Alarm Technician
EHSRM
(956) 665-3357

Laurencio Vela

Licensed Fire Alarm Technician
EHSRM
(956) 665-3357

The designated individual for the service and maintenance of fire alarms for Cameron County Campuses is:

RGV Fire Safety/Security, LLC

PO Box 803

Santa Rosa, TX 78593 US

rgvfiresecurity@gmail.com

Fire Alarm Initiating Devices

Smoke Detectors

There are approximately 2000 inventoried smoke detectors tied into university owned building fire alarm systems across campus. These smoke detectors are maintained, inventoried, cleaned and replaced by the fire alarm technicians. If a smoke detector, which is tied into the fire alarm system, becomes damaged, please contact the EHSRM at 665-3690 to initiate the necessary repair. Anyone performing an activity, which might initiate a fire alarm smoke detector, must contact the EHSRM at 665-3690 or the University Cooling Plant at 665-2796 prior to performing this activity. In some cases it may be necessary for an area to be zoned out or smoke detectors disconnected until the work has been completed. Prior to any changes or additions to the fire alarm system's smoke detector activation, contact the EHSRM.

Heat Detectors and Duct Detectors

There are approximately 300 duct detectors and 50 heat detectors inventoried in university owned buildings. These detectors are maintained, inventoried, cleaned and replaced by the UTRGV fire alarm technicians. Anyone performing an activity that might initiate a fire alarm duct detector or heat detector must contact EHSRM at 665-3690 prior to performing this activity. In some cases, it may be necessary for an area to be zoned out or detectors disconnected until the work has been completed. Prior to any additions or changes to the fire alarm system's heat detectors or duct detectors, contact EHSRM.

Bedroom Smoke Detectors

All bedrooms in housing facilities on campus are equipped with the following detection devices:

- a) The Village
 - i) 110-volt smoke detectors with 9-volt battery backup.
- b) Unity Hall
 - i) 110-volt smoke detectors with 9-volt battery backup
 - ii) Heat / Smoke detector, Heat detector connected to the general fire alarm.
- c) Heritage and Troxel hall
 - i) Smoke detectors connected and powered by the fire alarm panel.
- d) Casa Bella-
 - i) 110-volt smoke detectors with 9-volt battery backup
 - ii) Smoke/Heat detectors are connected to the general Fire Alarm.

Smoke detectors in university owned buildings are maintained by the fire alarm technicians / or designated contractor. If a bedroom smoke detector is broken or malfunctions, it is the responsibility of the occupant to notify the respective Resident Advisor who will notify the EHSRM Electronics technician to initiate the necessary repair.

Brownsville Campus - Resident Assistant will notify the Assistant Director for Residence Life who will EHSRM. EHSTM will then notify facilities to initiate the repair.

Inspection

Residential Advisors (RA's) inspect bedroom smoke detectors in each housing facility at the beginning of each month while the building is occupied. In the Unity Hall, Troxel and Heritage Hall, fire alarm technicians inspect, clean and test each bedroom smoke detector twice a year. The Village detectors are inspected and maintained by the Village maintenance personnel. Casa Bella detectors are inspected and maintained by facilities personnel.

Pull Stations and Pull Station Covers

There are approximately 1000 pull stations that initiate the fire alarm systems in University owned buildings on campus. Pull stations shall only be used for emergency purposes. They must be securely mounted and remain unobstructed at all times. These pull stations are maintained, inventoried and replaced by the UTRGV EHSRM fire alarm technicians. In the event that a pull station has been damaged, please contact the UTRGV EHSRM to initiate the necessary repair. Pull station covers that sound an audible alarm when they are tampered with protect some pull stations on campus. These pull station covers are operated on a 9-volt battery. Batteries are replaced in the pull station covers annually to assure they will alarm when tampered with. If a pull station cover is initiated or found alarming, contact EHSRM at 665-3690 or UTRGV PD at 665-7151 Edinburg. In Brownsville EHSRM at 882-5934 or UTRGV PD 882-8232. Prior to making any changes to pull stations or the addition of pull station covers, contact EHSRM.

Magnetic Door Holders

Magnetic door holders are found on many stairwell doors in University owned buildings on campus. Stairwell doors shall not be propped open except by installing magnetic door holders that are tied into the fire alarm system. These magnetic door holders allow the doors to remain open until a fire alarm is activated and then automatically release when the fire alarm is activated. This is the only means by which a stairwell door may be held open. All other fire doors must be kept closed to protect the means of egress from smoke.

Emergency Lights

Emergency lights are located throughout hallways of buildings on campus. Emergency lights should remain lit for at least 90 minutes after normal power fails. The UTRGV facilities department maintains all emergency lights in University owned buildings. The building representative or resident advisor of the building should report any emergency light found not illuminated during a power outage to the UTRGV Central Scheduling so they may notify EHSRM and resolve the issue. The UTRGV must provide adequate emergency lighting in all living quarters. It is the responsibility of the organization occupying the space to inform EHSRM if the emergency lights do not work properly during a power outage.

Inspection

Emergency lights are inspected on a monthly basis by the EHSRM. Emergency lights not working correctly in University owned buildings are repaired or replaced by facilities department personnel.

Exit Signs

Exit signs are located throughout all university owned buildings indicating the means of egress. Exit signs shall be illuminated at all times so the entire word "EXIT" can be read. Exit signs shall remain illuminated for at least 90 minutes after normal power fails. Any exit sign found within University owned buildings not working or with bulbs out should be reported to the EHSRM at 665-3690 by the building representative or the resident advisor of the area. The facilities department maintains all exit signs in University owned buildings. It is the responsibility of the organization occupying the space to inform EHSRM if the exit signs do not work properly during a power outage. Exit signs may not be removed from any exit or means of egress without prior written approval from the EHSRM. Contact EHSRM to discuss concerns regarding the placement of EXIT signs. Edinburg campus at 665-3690. Brownsville campus at 882-5934.

Inspections

Exit signs are inspected on a monthly basis by the EHSRM Personnel. Exit signs not working correctly in University owned buildings are repaired or replaced by facilities department personnel.

Exhaust Hood Systems

Suppression System

There are 18 kitchen hood suppression systems located at the University Cafeteria, Student Union, Child Development Center, Health Sciences West, Medical Education Building, and Brownsville student union. The EHSRM contracts an accredited,

licensed contractor to maintain and inspect these suppression systems and any concerns regarding a hood suppression system shall be directed to EHSRM at Edinburg campus 665-3690, Brownsville campus 882-5934. All operational kitchens in sororities and fraternities are considered commercial kitchens and must be handled as such. It is the responsibility of the organization occupying the space to ensure the hood is inspected prior to occupancy or use of the kitchen. Documentation of this inspection shall be placed on a tag attached to the pull station for the hood system.

Inspection

EHSRM oversees the inspection of University owned kitchen commercial hood suppression systems semiannually. Hood suppression systems are inspected on a semiannual basis. Documentation of this inspection is maintained at EHSRM and on the pull station for the hood suppression system. Use of any commercial kitchen on University property is not allowed without semiannual inspections and maintenance.

Table 2- Location of Hood Suppression Systems

Number	Location	Type	Inspection Frequency
1	UCCF-Cafeteria	Ansul R102 (2.5 gal)	Semi-Annually
2	UCCF- Cafeteria	Ansul R102 (6 gal)	Semi-Annually
3	UCCF- Cafeteria	Ansul (2.5 gallons)	Semi-Annually
4	Student Union-Kitchen	Ansul R102 (6 gal)	Semi-Annually
5	Student Union-Taco Ponchos	Ansul (6 gal)	Semi-Annually
6	Student Union-Chick-Fil-A	Range Guard (2.5 gal)	Semi-Annually
7	Student Union-Chick-Fil-A	Range Guard (5 gal)	Semi-Annually
8	Student Union-Mein Bowl	Range Guard (2.5 gal)	Semi-Annually
9	Child Development Center	Range Guard (2.5 gal)	Semi-Annually
10	HSHW	Range Guard (2.5 gal)	Semi-Annually
11	HSHW	Range Guard (2.5 gal)	Semi-Annually
12	HSHW	Range Guard (2.5 gal)	Semi-Annually
13	EMEBL	Range Guard (3 Gal)	Semi - Annually
14	EMEBL	Range Guard (3 Gal)	Semi - Annually
15	STADIUM	Ansul	Annual
16	STADIUM	Ansul	Annual
17	Brownsville Student Union	Ansul	Semi-Annually
18	Brownsville Student Union	Ansul	Semi-Annually

The designated contractor for the inspection of the kitchen hood fire suppression system inspection is:

C&P Fire and Safety
 4704 Thunderbird
 McAllen, TX 78504
 Contact: Cesar Wilson

Cleaning and Filter change

The EHSRM contracts an accredited, licensed contractor to maintain and inspect these hood systems and any concerns regarding a hood system cleaning and filter exchange should be directed to EHSRM at Edinburg 665- 3690, Brownsville 882-5929.

Inspection

Kitchen hood exhaust systems are cleaned and the filters cleaned on a semi-annual basis. Documentation of this inspection is maintained at EHSRM and a tag placed on the front of the exhaust hood system. Use of any commercial kitchen on University property is not allowed without semiannual preventative inspections and maintenance.

Table 3- Hood and Filter Cleaning:

Number	Location	Rm	Inspection Frequency per annum
1	Cafeteria	Serving line	2
2	Cafeteria	Kitchen	2
3	Cafeteria	Kitchen	2
4	STUN	Taco Ponchos	2
5	STUN	Chic Fil A	2
6	STUN	Chic Fil A	2
7	STUN	Mein Bowl	2
8	STUN	Sub Connection	2
9	STUN	Slice of Life	2
10	EHABW	Dietetics Kitchen	2
11	EHABW	Dietetics Kitchen	2
12	EHABW	Dietetics Kitchen	2
13	EMEBL	Kitchen 1.113	2
14	EMEBL	Kitchen 1.113	2
15	CDC	Kitchen	2
16	STADIUM	Baseball Stadium	2
17	STADIUM	Baseball Stadium	2
18	BSTUN	Kitchen	2
19	BSTUN	Kitchen	2

The designated contractor for the exhaust hood and filter cleaning is:

Fire Drills/Fire Evacuation

Frequency

The EHSRM conducts fire drills annually in all buildings and three times a year (spring, summer and fall semesters) in all residential settings, and monthly at the Child Development Center. Drills are conducted both during work hours and also at night. Drills are generally unannounced to building occupants. The purpose of the drills is to ensure that students and employees hear the alarm, understand that it signifies an emergency where evacuating the building is necessary, and are able to evacuate in an orderly fashion. Buildings are cleared to ensure all occupants have evacuated. An evaluation is conducted after each drill to determine evacuation time, UTRGV PD response time, and if occupants exited the building in an orderly fashion (see attached).

Failure to Evacuate

It is the responsibility of each occupant to evacuate or move to an area of rescue assistance during a fire alarm, if possible. Buildings will be cleared by UTRGV PD to assure all occupants have evacuated.

Evacuation Routes

Occupants and evacuation assistants should be aware of the evacuation routes for a given building. Evacuation assistants should guide occupants to the safest evacuation route and assemble outside of the building 150 feet upwind from the building.

Occupancy Levels

Occupancy levels are determined according to NFPA 1 Fire Code and 101 – Life Safety Code. Information needed to find the occupancy load of the building includes:

- a) The square footage of the area in question
- b) The square footage of unusable space, i.e. tables, desks, teaching islands, etc.
- c) The type of seating to be provided
- d) The type of activity planned
- e) The obstacles and exits of the area in question

For specific occupancy limits, contact EHSRM at Edinburg 665-3690. Brownsville 882-5934

Non-Fixed Seating (tables and chairs)

To determine a rough estimate of the number of occupants allowed, first take the square footage of the area in question and subtract the areas of the obstacles of the

room from this amount (including tables, chairs, stages, etc.). Once this is completed, divide the remaining area by 15 to determine an approximate number of occupants, which are allowed in this area at any given time (providing the obstacles remain the same).

Example:

250 sq. feet in room – 75 sq. feet (tables/chairs) = 175 sq. feet left in room

175 sq. feet left in room ÷ 15 = 11.67

Therefore approximately 11 people could occupy this area at any time given the tables and chairs remained the same.

Fixed Seating

The number of occupants allowed in a fixed seating area (example: auditorium or stadium) is determined by the number of fixed seats present in the area of question. Additional seats may not be added to the area in question.

Example:

The seating area holds 160 people in the seats affixed to the floor. Therefore, only 160 people may occupy this space at the same time.

Standing Room Only

To determine a rough estimate of the number of occupants allowed, take the square footage of the area in question and subtract the areas of the obstacles of the room from this amount (including tables, chairs, stages, etc.) Once this is completed, divide the remaining area by 7 to determine an approximate number of occupants which are allowed for this area at any given time (providing the obstacles remain the same).

Example:

250 sq. feet in room – 100 sq. feet of obstacles in the room (stage) = 150 sq. feet

150 sq. feet left in room ÷ 7 = 21.42

Therefore approximately 21 people could occupy this area at any time given the obstacles remained the same (stage).

Assembly Guidelines

These guidelines denote what procedures and policy are in place for an occupancy used for a gathering of 50 or more persons for deliberation, entertainment, eating,

amusement, awaiting transportation, or similar uses; or used as a special amusement building, regardless of occupant load.

Specific Information on Assembly Guidelines can be found in Appendix A-Assembly Guidelines.

No Smoking Policy

The UTRGV is a tobacco-free campus. As such, smoking and all forms of tobacco use is not allowed on campus.

Open Flames

Open flames are not allowed near spray booths or in the presence of combustible or flammable liquids, dusts or vapors, excelsior, paper, or similar materials. Any torches being used must not be left unattended while burning. Information on open flames in labs can be found in The UTRGV Chemical Hygiene Plan and Laboratory Guide. The EHSRM must approve any other use of an open flame on campus. Open flames can include, but are not limited to, the use of candles, bon fires, incense burners and torches. The following information must be presented to EHSRM prior to approval of the use of an open flame: building name, area or room number where used, dates of use, hours of use, project or reason for request, equipment to be used, type of open flame device to be used, ignition procedure for open flame device, and location of the nearest smoke detector and type of smoke detector (smoke detector tied into the fire alarm system or standalone smoke detector). The EHSRM may outline precautions that must also be taken in order to use the open flame. If these precautions are not followed, the EHSRM reserves the right to terminate or decline the approval of the open light or flame.

Candles

The UTRGV EHSRM does not allow the use of candles in any buildings. When candles are used in ceremonies, caution must be taken to assure they are handled correctly. Approval must be obtained from the EHSRM prior to the use of candles. Never leave a candle unattended for any reason. Care must also be taken when extinguishing candles. Prior to the use of candles on campus, contact the EHSRM at Edinburg 665-3690. Brownsville 882-5934. A person may not light, build, make or deposit ashes or embers which could cause fire in any UTRGV building or on the campus grounds.

Decorations

Decorations including, but not limited to, boxes, cardboard, mazes, hay, bamboo, cotton batting, straw, vines or pallets are prohibited on campus. Structurally sound band platforms are acceptable. The EHSRM must approve all other decorations. Also, many structures and decorations, like those planned for social events or parties may need to be inspected by an engineer and deemed "safe" for its purpose of use before the approval is granted. Tents erected on UTRGV must be flame retardant. Documentation of this treatment or material should be kept on hand at each tent

location. At least twelve feet of non-obstructed space should be left open and free on all sides of the tent unless otherwise approved by the EHSRM. All tents must be adequately supported, roped, anchored and braced to assure the tent will withstand the elements of the weather and not collapse. All aisles in tents and exits from the tents should be left unobstructed. Tents or tent ropes, anchors or braces must be erected approximately two feet away from sidewalks and may not extend over or block any sidewalk. Contact the EHSRM at Edinburg 665-3690. Brownsville 882-5934 regarding concerns over the placement of tents on the UTRGV campus.

The use of live Christmas trees is prohibited in UTRGV buildings unless approved by EHSRM. Any electrical decorations, which may be used on Christmas trees, must be UL listed, in good working order, and approved. Contact EHSRM at Edinburg 665-3690, Brownsville 882-5934, prior to the establishment of any seasonal decorations.

Specific information can be found in Appendix B - Holiday and Decoration Fire Safety Guidelines of this document.

Portable Heating Appliances and Extension Cords

Portable fireplaces

Portable fireplaces are not allowed in buildings. Fireplaces used on campus must have a fire screen the correct size for the fireplace. Only wood should be burned inside the fireplace, never paper, plastic or flammables.

Portable Space Heaters

Since great care must be taken to utilize portable heaters properly, their use is discouraged on campus. Contact EHSRM at Edinburg 665-3690. Brownsville 882-5934, for requirements that govern the use of these heaters.

Prohibited Heaters

- a) Heaters that use 1500 watts or more of electricity
- b) An electric heater with electric elements that glow bright orange or red
- c) An electric heater in which the elements are exposed
- d) A heater that burns fossil fuels or alcohol
- e) Units that are not grounded and UL approved.

User Instructions

- a) Before operating the heater, always read and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions
- b) The heater must have an automatic safety switch that turns the unit off if it is tipped over.

- c) Heaters shall not be operated under desks or tables and must have a minimum of 18 inches of clearance from combustible materials (as papers, magazines or office furniture).
- d) Before using the heater, inspect the electrical cord. Look for frayed wire or cracked insulation. If there are any defects in the cord or unit, DO NOT USE. Do not connect an extension cord to the heater.
- e) Never leave the unit on while you are out of your office. Always check the unit before leaving your office for lunch or at the end of the day and make sure it is shut off and disconnect from the electrical outlet.
- f) Do not place the heater near combustible materials. Allow at least three feet between the heater and combustible material.
- g) Do not place the heater in or near wet areas or in high traffic areas such as exit ways.

Extension cords

The use of extension cords is discouraged on campus. However, if an extension cord must be used, there are several guidelines that must be followed. Extension cords are only for temporary use and shall not be used for more than an 8-hour workday. All extension cords used on campus must be UL listed and approved. These extension cords shall only be used within the appropriate rating by comparing the rating on the extension cord to the rating on the temporary appliance being used. If a cord on the appliance being used has a three-pronged adapter, the extension cord must also be three pronged. Splicing together of extension cords is not allowed nor is the plugging together of multiple extension cords. Extension cords used outside or in potentially wet environments must be protected by ground fault circuit interrupters. Extension cords may never be run under rugs or carpet, through walkways or windows, or over ceiling tiles. Never use any extension cord that is damaged or frayed. Do not use extension cords on any heat-producing appliance such as a portable heater, halogen lamp, blow dryer, or iron.

Halogen lamps pose serious safety hazards. Their bulbs may shatter due to exposure to high temperature, they are easily tipped over due to their design and they may inadvertently ignite combustible materials. For these reasons, halogen lamps may not be used on campus in the dorms or other University housing.

Means of Egress

Each building or area occupied must have the appropriate number of exits. Exits must be clear and unobstructed. Curtains, drapes, or any other items are not allowed to confuse or conceal any exit or means of egress. Sitting or standing in any exit or means of egress is not allowed. Exits are marked by illuminated exit signs with

battery backup as established in NFPA. Exit doors must be easily opened from the inside and shall not involve the use of any special procedures or keys to open.

Stairwell Doors and Exit Doors

All exit doorways, including stairwell doors, shall be the correct size for the occupancy of the building as established by NFPA 101. Exit and stairwell doors must be easily opened from the inside without the use of any special procedures or a key. Stairwell doors shall not have deadbolt locks on them or be propped open with a doorstop, kickstand doorstop, trashcan, chair, or any other device. All stairwell doors shall have door closures that are automatic closing devices. Doors, which can swing both ways, shall have a viewing area provided. In the event that a doorstop or a deadbolt is found on a stairwell door, it will be immediately removed at the expense of the organization occupying the building. Once a stairwell door is found propped open by any other item, the organization occupying the building will be given a warning and the device used to prop the door open will be confiscated.

Hallways, Stairwells, Ceiling Tiles and Aisles

All hallways and stairwells must be clear of any clutter, obstruction, or storage. Each corridor shall be at least 44 inches wide with a minimum height of 7 feet. Bicycles, furniture, lawnmowers, and any items that could impede egress are not permitted in stairwells and hallways. The area shall be well lit and free of stored combustibles (paper, wood, etc.).

Ceiling tiles act as a fire barrier. Heat from a fire can accumulate above missing or broken ceiling tiles, thus increasing the time for an automatic sprinkler system to function, the fire rating of the ceiling may change, the fire insurance may become void and most importantly, it creates a "Chimney Effect" in the event of a fire. It is the responsibility of the organization occupying the space to verify that any damaged or missing ceiling tiles are replaced. In University owned buildings, it is the responsibility of the ASFC Maintenance Department to replace them.

Any area of a building where tables, seats, chairs, equipment, etc. are installed, an aisle shall be provided which leads to an exit. All aisles shall be at least 36 inches wide and unobstructed. Floors shall be clear of any tripping hazards including, but not limited to, cords and debris. Sitting or standing in any aisle or path leading to an exit is not allowed.

Compressed Gases or Compressed Air

All compressed gas cylinders shall be adequately secured regardless of whether they are empty or full. Appropriate chains, straps or stands are utilized to keep them from falling. Compressed gas cylinders shall not be left freestanding. If cylinders are found freestanding, they will be removed at the expense of the cylinders' owners. When moving compressed gasses, verify the protective caps are in place to protect valve

stems and assure stability by strapping them to hand-trucks. Never tamper, force or lubricate cylinder valves. Contact the compressed gas company responsible for delivering the gases if problems occur with the compressed gas cylinder valve. Remember to wear safety glasses when using compressed gasses. Compressed gasses or compressed air shall never be directed towards a person or used to blow dust or particles off skin or clothing. Other safety guidelines regarding compressed gases can be found in The UTRGV Chemical Hygiene Plan.

Labs

Extinguishers in laboratories are inspected monthly. If combustible metals such as lithium or sodium are used in a lab, a Class D fire extinguisher shall be available in case of a fire. Ensure there are no flammable vapors present in the area prior to utilizing an open flame. Inspect gas burner tubing to confirm quality and identify any worn or damaged tubing. Replace damaged tubing immediately. When transferring flammable liquids from one metal container to another, make sure the containers are grounded and bonded. "No Smoking" notices shall be posted in all labs where flammable liquids are stored or handled. Smoking is not allowed in any laboratory on campus. All laboratory personnel shall be trained in the operation of fire safety equipment of the lab. Review the Laboratory Chemical Hygiene Plan regarding other safety concerns in labs.

Housekeeping

General housekeeping is a high priority on all UTRGV campuses. It is the responsibility of the organization occupying the space to keep the area clean and orderly. Contact the EH SRM regarding concerns about occupancy, fire safety, or the disposal of hazardous materials.

Kilns

Always assure all electrical connections are secure in electric kilns prior to use and there is an automatic shut off on gas-fired kilns. Kilns shall only be used in well-ventilated areas with plenty of space between the kiln and the wall or combustibles. A ten-pound multi-purpose (ABC) dry chemical fire extinguisher shall be located near the kiln. The space surrounding the kiln should be kept clean and free of dusts. Prior to the installation of a kiln, contact the EH SRM to discuss the proper location and other safety considerations to be taken when operating a kiln.

Residential Life

Early into each semester, Resident Advisors (RA's), along with Directors of residential buildings shall conduct a safety awareness meeting with all residents to discuss the Emergency Evacuation Plan. The RA's shall discuss proper evacuation during a fire alarm, locations of safety equipment, proper use of safety equipment and the buddy system with all residents. They shall inform all residents of the need for

immediate evacuation during fire alarms or fire drills. They shall also explain to residents the penalties for causing a false alarm, misusing, tampering with or damaging fire equipment or not evacuating during a fire alarm or drill.

Fire safety equipment is distributed differently depending on the type of housing area and occupants. Below is a description of the fire safety equipment on campus along with the distribution of such equipment in Residential Life areas.

Dormitories

Each University owned dormitory is equipped with fire extinguishers in common areas and smoke detectors in each dorm room. Once a month, these extinguishers are inspected. These extinguishers are inspected annually and provided 6-year maintenance, hydrostatic testing or recharging, where needed. Each smoke detector is cleaned semi-annually, inspected and tested for operation. Fire alarm systems are also tested annually to assure all devices are working properly.

The Village Apartments Edinburg

Casa Bella Brownsville

Each University owned apartment building or complex is equipped with a fire extinguisher in the kitchen area and smoke detectors near the sleeping areas. Extinguishers are inspected monthly, annually and provided 6-year maintenance, hydrostatic testing or recharging when needed and each smoke detector is cleaned, inspected and tested for operation. It is the responsibility of the resident to notify the Residential Life Office or RA if there are problems with the smoke detectors or if the fire extinguisher has been discharged. Fire alarm systems are tested annually to assure all devices are working properly.

Training

Emergency Evacuation and Fire Extinguisher Training

EHSRM offers Emergency Evacuation training on a monthly basis. All Emergency Evacuations Assistants are required to attend this training. This training focuses on fire emergencies and appropriate response. Training is offered on the proper use of fire extinguishers; this training focuses on the P.A.S.S. technique, the different types of extinguishers, and allows each individual the opportunity to handle a fire extinguisher and put out a fire using an extinguisher. Fire Extinguisher training is conducted under the provisions set forth by *CFR Title 29, Part 1910 (OSHA) Section 157, Paragraphs g.1&2 and NFPA 101 4.8.1((2)), 4.8.2.1., 39.7.3* Contact EHSRM at Edinburg 665-3690 and Brownsville 882-5929, to schedule a special date for training.

Hot Work Permits

UTRGV EHSRM requires the use of Hot Work Permits as a primary means of preventing fires due to non-routine open-flame and high temperature work. This applies to all UTRGV employees and outside contractors.

As set forth in NFPA 1, Fire Code, 2012 Edition, NFPA 51B: Standard for Fire Prevention During Welding, Cutting, and Other Hot Work, 2014 Edition, Permits are required when performing any type of Hot Work on UTRGV campus. Hot Work is any work using open flames or sources of heat or sparks that could ignite materials in the work area. Examples of Hot Work include but not limited to:

Welding

Burning

Brazing

Propane soldering

Oxyacetylene cutting

Grinding ferrous metal

Hot works permits shall be obtained by contacting EHSRM at 665-3690

Edinburg, or 882-5930 Brownsville. Hot work shall not begin until a member of EHSRM has provided the permit and assessed the location for smoke and heat detectors.

Welding and Cutting

Qualified individuals shall only perform welding. These individuals shall only be UTRGV Physical Plant employees and outside contractors.

Areas where welding and cutting will occur should be free of combustibles and flammables and well ventilated. Welding should occur within the confines of an area designed for such work (fire resistant and segregated from adjacent areas and projects). Whenever the work cannot be removed from the area, the area shall be made safe by removing flammables and combustibles (the floor should be clean for at least a radius of 35 feet). Where there are cracks or holes in the walls or floor within 35 feet of the welding or cutting area, the holes or cracks should be covered to assure sparks do not pass through these areas. Where welding or cutting will occur near walls, floors or ceiling, the area shall be protected by fire-resistant guards or shields. Relocate combustibles from near metal walls, partitions or floors if welding will be done where the conduction of heat may ignite these combustibles.

If combustibles cannot be removed from the area, a fire watch may be necessary. In this case, a qualified individual or individuals (depending upon the size or amount and type of combustible) would have to remain in the area near the welding/cutting site and visually observe the combustibles and other surroundings for a period of time to ensure that a fire has not been the direct result of this welding or cutting. Contact EHSRM regarding fire watch procedure. Do not perform cutting or welding on metal pipes that come in contact with combustibles if the work is close enough to cause a

fire by conduction or in areas where there are flammable gases, vapors, dusts, liquids, or tanks containing flammable liquids. Welding or cutting on drums, barrels or tanks is not allowed unless it is known that there has not been any flammables or toxic materials contained in the drum, barrel or tank, and the drum, barrel or tank has been cleaned and approved for such welding or cutting by the EHSRM.

When welding or cutting, always have a fire extinguisher handy or know the location of the nearest fire extinguisher. When the welding or cutting operation has been suspended, the equipment must be cut off. Always schedule a checkup on the area welded or cut thirty minutes after the completion of the operation. Welding shields, goggles or helmets are needed to protect the eyes and face during welding.

Contact EHSRM regarding further information on welding and personal protective equipment. For further information, refer to the UTRGV Physical Safety Manual.

Fire Watch

In any UTRGV building where a fire alarm system, wet sprinkler system, or dry suppression system is out of service, EHSRM shall be notified immediately and a fire watch will be provided for all parties left unprotected by the shutdown until the impaired system has been returned to service.

A fire watch consists of the following: A UTRGV PD guard shall be assigned to walk the affected area, walking each floor at least once an hour. The guard shall be trained in the use of fire extinguishers, notifying the UTRGV PD in case of fire or presence of smoke, sounding the verbal fire alarm, and ensuring that all occupants exit the building in case of a fire.

Fire Watch Personnel shall:

- a) Understand the specific nature of the impairment and the specific area affected.
- b) Be a roving watch which covers all areas affected by the impairment.
- c) Have been instructed in the appropriate emergency actions, including best method to sound the alarm, the procedure to manually trip suppression systems if they are available, or use of portable extinguishers.
- d) Have been instructed in the frequency of the fire watch tours.
- e) Have documented (by Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management) portable fire extinguisher training (including actual fire extinguishment).
- f) The frequency of tours will be as follows:
 - i) At least once an hour, if only automatic alarm capability is out-of-service.
 - ii) Continuous, when automatic suppression systems are out of service
 - iii) As amended by the EHSRM Fire Safety Manager.

Setting a Fire Watch

- a) Contractor, Fire alarm technician, and/or cooling plant operator disabling alarm system will immediately contact EHSRM and inform of work to be performed, length of time system will be disabled, and estimated time it will be in service again.
- b) EHSRM will contact UTRGV PD and request a fire watch at building, via e-mail and telephone, if system will be disabled for more than 4 hours in a 24 hour period.
- c) EHSRM will inform UTRGV PD via e-mail when fire watch is no longer required.

Persons authorized to place a building on Fire Watch

- a) EHSRM Personnel
- b) Cooling plant personnel
- c) Fire Alarm technician
- d) UTRGV PD

Setting a Fire Watch after 5:00 p.m. and weekends

Cooling Plant

- a) Operator will call UTRGV PD dispatch and call a fire watch. UTRGV PD will forward e-mail regarding fire watch
- b) Operator will call EHSRM Personnel and inform of reason for fire watch

University Police Department

- a) UTRGV PD will contact Cooling plant to inform of reason for fire watch. UTRGV PD will forward e-mail regarding fire watch
- b) Cooling plant operator will call EHSRM Personnel and inform of reason for fire watch

Material Storage and Handling

Material may not be stored in corridors, aisles, stairwells, hallways or mechanical rooms. Combustibles may not be stored in attics. Materials may not be stored within 18 inches of any sprinkler deflectors, light fixtures, ventilation grates, or fire alarm panel. No material may be stored in a way that it is blocking fire alarm audio/visual

device or pull station. Refer to the Hazardous Material Management Guidelines for information on specific hazardous material storage. Hot ashes, cinders, or coals may not be deposited in or near any building or grounds area on the UTRGV campus. These items may only be placed in noncombustible or metal receptacles so designated by the EHSRM. Any items stored outside must be stored in a neat and orderly manner with no storage exceeding ten feet in height or twenty feet in diameter.

Fireworks

Approval must be obtained from the EHSRM and the Local Fire Marshall prior to the use of fireworks on campus. Contact the EHSRM at least ten days prior to the scheduled fireworks exhibition. A "no burn ordinance" overrides a fireworks permit. Therefore, any time a "no burn ordinance" is in effect, the scheduled fireworks program will be canceled. Under no circumstances will a fireworks exhibition be allowed to commence when winds exceed 20 mph.

Communication

The EHSRM is the liaison between The UTRGV and regulatory compliance agencies. Contact EHSRM if you have any fire safety concerns or issues. All press releases or comments shall be approved and/or made through the UTRGV Office of University Relations.

Fire Alarm Response

The Central Cooling Plant monitors the alarms and notifies UTRGV PD when an alarm is activated. For buildings not monitored by Cooling Plant, the fire alarm signal is sent directly to UTRGV PD. The protocol for a Fire Alarm on campus is as follows:

- a) All UTRGV buildings require immediate notification to UTRGV PD and Local Fire Department.
- b) All UTRGV buildings require full response by UTRGV PD and Local Fire Department.:

The UTRGV-EHSRM

The EHSRM acts as the liaison between The UTRGV and the Local Fire Department. EHSRM may assist with communication, identification of locations of suppression equipment and location of activated fire alarm system equipment. EHSRM may also assist with obtaining repair or replacement of a system device by notifying the fire alarm system technician. During working hours, EHSRM responds to fire alarms on campus.

Local Fire Department

Once a fire alarm system is activated, the responding Local Fire Departments have authority of the area until the incident has been resolved. A fire alarm can only be silenced or reset after the Fire Department gives consent to UPD or the representative of EHSRM. The local Fire Department Fire Marshalls are as follows:

City of Edinburg

Fire Marshal Gabriel Espinoza
Edinburg, Texas
(956) 292-2001

City of Harlingen

Fire Marshal Juan Saucedo

Harlingen, Texas

(956) 216-5791

City of McAllen

Fire Marshal Agustin Galvan

McAllen, Texas

(956) 681-2500

Rio Grande City

Fire Chief Manuel Muniz

(956) 487-5312

Port Isabel

Fire Marshal John Sandoval

(956) 943-3523

South Padre Island

Fire Marshal Jim Pigg

(956) 761-3040

Brownsville

Fire Marshal Daniel Villarreal

(956) 548-6075

Laguna Vista

Scott Megill

(956) 426-9089

Mercedes

Fire Marshal Ruben Gutierrez

(956) 565-7755

Weslaco

Fire Marshal Chris Sanchez

(956) 447-3415

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley - Police Department

The UTRGV PD also takes a very active role during fire alarms. Representatives of UTRGV PD immediately respond to all fire alarms on campus. They control the crowd by moving students, employees or other individuals away from the building where the alarm is sounding. UTRGV PD also assists in controlling traffic in heavy congested areas, assists Building Representatives to assure all building occupants are accounted for, provides communication to UTRGV departments which the Fire Department might use as resources, and overall assists the Fire Department as needed.

The UTRGV Academic Support Facility – Physical Plant

During a fire alarm or other emergency The UTRGV ASFC may be asked to address areas of concern regarding the building and life safety as specified by the Fire Department or representatives from EHSRM. The ASFC Maintenance maintains all

university owned buildings. In the case of fire or some other emergency, the ASFC may also be asked to find temporary storage or office space for those affected in University owned academic and office areas.

The UTRGV Dean of Students or Office of Student Life

During an emergency situation where University student housing has been affected, the Dean of Students or Office of Student Life may be asked to help find temporary housing for those students affected.

Contractors

During a fire alarm or other emergency, contractors may be asked to respond to the situation at hand if it is occurring in a University owned building. For this reason, it is important that The UTRGV PD have a listing of the responsible parties of buildings on campus. It is also important that contractors understand their limitations and some guidelines have been set forth between the entity owning the building and those making repairs to the building. Never assume that the UTRGV PD has access to any University owned buildings or will allow contractors access to these areas. It is the responsibility of those owning the buildings to allow contractors access to their buildings.

Fire Alarm Evacuation Procedures

Evacuation for Students, Professionals, Staff, and Guests

a) Activating the Fire Alarm

- i) If a fire is noticed, leave the hazard area. Do not risk a life by remaining in the unsafe building. If operating a heat source or flame, please extinguish it before exiting the building, if possible.
- ii) On the way out of the building, pull a fire alarm system pull station. It may be necessary to break the glass or raise the pull station cover in order to pull the alarm. Some common locations of pull stations are at stairwell doors and exits.
- iii) By sounding the alarm, occupants of the building are notified of a fire hazard and should evacuate the building. However, most importantly, UTRGV PD , EHSRM, and the Fire Department are notified immediately of the hazard.

b) Evacuating the Building

- i) When the fire alarm sounds, everyone must proceed with their emergency evacuation plan or evacuate the building immediately, even if another individual tells you that the fire alarm is being tested. Do not assume it is just a drill.

- ii) When evacuating, turn off any appliance or equipment you might be operating. Isolate your area by closing doors and windows and leave the building.
- iii) Only use a portable fire extinguisher to control a small fire or assist yourself or someone else to evacuate the area. Remember, not all fire extinguishers are effective on all types of fires; so do not try to extinguish the fire unless you have been properly trained. Do not fight the fire if it is already beginning to spread beyond the location where it started, if you can't fight the fire with your back to an exit, or if the fire can block your only exit.
- iv) Walk; do not run when evacuating the building. Assist those individuals with disabilities or those unable to evacuate by telling authorities their locations within the building. (See Safe Fire Alarm Evacuation Procedures for the Physically Challenged)
- v) To avoid smoke, stay low to the ground and cover your mouth and nose with a damp cloth, if possible, to help you breathe.
- vi) Do not use the elevators to evacuate.

When evacuating, travel horizontally, moving away from the fire until you reach a safe distance away from the hazard or an exit or stairwell door. Then travel vertically down the stairwell until you reach an exit leading to the outside. Enclosed stairwells are fire rated enclosures that can be used as areas of rescue assistance for those individuals needing assistance exiting the building.

- vii) If you must open corridor doors, hallway doors, bedroom doors, or office doors, feel them first by using the back of your hand (never the palm). If they are cool, open them and continue to follow the emergency evacuation plan and move towards an exit or stairwell if conditions allow.

c) Evacuation for Physically Challenged

- i) Although The UTRGV requires all occupants of a building to evacuate when the fire alarm is activated, individuals with disabilities may need assistance or special procedures to evacuate effectively. For this reason, they should inform other individuals, especially housing coordinators or Residential Advisors, that they may need assistance in a fire alarm during the emergency evacuation-planning phase. Below are some tips that may prove useful during a fire alarm evacuation:

d) Utilize the Buddy System

- i) During the first few days at a new job or at classes, discuss with others your need for a "buddy" if the fire alarm goes off.
- ii) Obtain several buddies in different locations where you may be during an alarm and discuss your evacuation plan with your buddies (especially housing coordinators or Residential Advisors).
- iii) Explain what type of assistance you would need during a fire alarm.
- iv) Plan and practice your procedure or evacuation during a fire alarm..

- v) If possible, your buddy should assure your location; capabilities and need for assistance during a fire alarm (however, do not risk life).
 - vi) Your buddy should inform UTRGV PD or the Fire Department of your need for assistance, plan, and location during a fire alarm.
- e) Recognize your Capabilities and Limitations for Evacuating the Building**
- i) When evacuating, travel horizontally, moving away from the fire until you reach a safe distance away from the hazard or an exit or stairwell door. Then travel vertically down the stairwell until you reach an exit leading to the outside.
 - ii) Enclosed stairwells are fire rated enclosures that can be used as areas of refuge for those individuals needing assistance exiting the building.
 - iii) Persons utilizing wheelchairs should be taken to an area of refuge (usually stairwell landings) or stay where they are located. This still requires their buddy notify UTRGV PD or the Fire Department of their location once they reach the assembly location outside. If the mobility-impaired individual is alone, he/she should dial 911 and inform the dispatcher of his/her location, inability to evacuate and/or area of rescue assistance where they located.
 - iv) Persons with mobility impairments but without the need of a wheelchair will need to attempt to evacuate the building, allowing traffic to pass, when needed, in areas like stairwells. These individuals may decide to remain in place and contact 911 with their location if there is no sign of imminent hazard, and due to their impairment, they would not be able to evacuate the building at this time without assistance.
 - v) Persons with physical impairments, such as hearing impairments, may need rooms equipped with additional warning signals to inform them of activation of the fire alarm. A buddy may be needed to notify or assist the physically impaired during an emergency. Contact EHSRM Edinburg at 665-3690, Brownsville 882-5934 to request additional warning signals for a room.
 - vi) Individuals who are visually impaired may need a buddy to assist him/her through the evacuation route. If the visually impaired individual is unable to evacuate alone, he/she should dial 911 and inform the dispatcher of his/her location, inability to evacuate and/or the area of rescue assistance where they are located
- f) Once Outside**
- i) Move away from the building to a pre-designated location where a headcount should be initiated by the evacuation assistant, Residential Advisor, or another designated individual.
 - ii) Notify emergency services of anyone needing assistance exiting the building.
 - iii) The evacuation assistant or some other supervisory personnel should notify UTRGV PD of anyone unaccounted for during the evacuation.

g) Resetting the Fire Alarm and Re-entering the Building

- i) Remain outside and away from the building until you are given further instructions from the Fire Department, UTRGV PD or a representative from EHSRM.
- ii) Only the Fire Department can authorize the fire alarm system to be reset or silenced after the initiation of a fire alarm.
- iii) UTRGV PD and the representative of EHSRM responding to the alarm have access to the fire alarm panel keys.
- iv) UTRGV PD and the representative from EHSRM are the only entities on campus authorized to reset a fire alarm once approved by Fire Department.
- v) Once the fire alarm system has been reset and the Fire Department has given the approval for re-entering the building, then faculty, staff, students, guests or others may reoccupy the area.

Procedures if trapped in a Building which is burning

- a) If the door is hot, don't open the door.
- b) If there is too much smoke or fire in the hallway for a safe evacuation, then remain in the room. Close the door and position towels or articles of clothing (dampened if possible) around the bottom edge of the door.
- c) Call 911 and tell the dispatcher your name, where you are located and the reason you could not evacuate. The dispatcher will contact the UTRGV PD officers on the scene who will notify Fire Department.
- d) If you have a window that can be opened, open the window and hang a sheet, piece of clothing or another similar object out the window and wave it so it can be seen. This open window will allow fresh air to circulate into the room.
- e) If the window cannot be opened, create a sign to display at the window indicating that you need help.
- f) If you feel as though you can no longer breathe, break the window out using a chair and get the attention of those below.
- g) Remain calm and wait for the Fire Department to assist you in evacuating the area.

Procedures if you are on Fire

- a) Stop where you are.
- b) Drop to the floor.
- c) Roll until the flames have been smothered.

Procedures if Someone Else is on Fire

- a) Try to smother flames by wrapping the individual on fire in a blanket or some other item that could be used to smother flames.
- b) If unable to assist the individual on fire, insist that the person stop, drop and roll.

Investigations

Fire Alarm

In the past there have been some confusing and/or conflicting opinions among faculty, staff and/or students regarding false fire alarms. There are actually very few fire alarms initiated by faulty fire safety equipment, such as a smoke detector or heat detector that malfunctions. In fact, most alarms are initiated due to the actions of those inside the building. This does not mean that each alarm corresponds with an actual fire. The alarm could correspond with someone who is smoking near a smoke detector or an air conditioning unit that is overheating. For this reason, it is very important that people monitor their own habits closely and review fire safety data in a manner that considers the cause and the effect of the alarm rather than simply defining the alarm as being a true or false alarm. In the event that a piece of faulty equipment initiated the fire alarm, EHSRM monitors the repair/replacement of this equipment to assure this action does not occur again. The UTRGV PD also investigates each fire alarm on campus to determine the cause of the alarm and maintains this information in an active database. Contact the EHSRM at Edinburg 665-3690, Brownsville 882-5934, regarding any questions or concerns about fire alarms on campus.

Arson

Many cases of fires on college campuses are directly linked to arson. Both The UTRGV PD and the Fire Department investigate cases of arson on The UTRGV campus. EHSRM also maintains information on fire alarms related to cases of arson on campus. Contact Edinburg 665-3690, Brownsville 882-5934, regarding any questions or concerns directly related to fire alarms attributed to cases of arson.

Appendix A- Assembly Guidelines

Use the following guidelines when setting up locations (gym, etc.) for assembly occupancies exceeding 50 persons.

Set-Up

A copy of the floor plan shall be forwarded to EHSRM a minimum of 5 days in advance for approval prior to any set-up to determine occupancy factors, required aisle ways, and necessary fire safety procedures. When multiple set ups will be used, floor plans for each different setup must be forwarded. Any changes must be discussed with EHSRM. “Last minute” changes will also require review by EHSRM.

When setting up the assembly location, the following guidelines should be adhered to:

Egress Requirements

- i) The required number of exits shall be available
- ii) Exits shall be visible and shall not be blocked
- iii) All exit doors shall remain unlocked and unobstructed
- iv) Exit signs shall be visible
- v) Egress to exits shall not be blocked (minimum four foot aisle space)
- vi) Required aisle space shall be available

Area immediately outside of exits shall be unobstructed. Tables, chairs, tents, ice chests, soft drink dispensers, trailers, vehicles, portable kitchens, barbecue pits, and all other items deemed as an obstacle to egress shall not be placed in path of travel.

Fire Safety

- i) Fire extinguishers shall be unobstructed
- ii) Fire alarm pull stations shall be unobstructed
- iii) Fire alarm panels shall not be obstructed
- iv) Existing sprinkler system heads shall not be obstructed, nor shall any items be hung from heads
- v) Construction of booths, decorative curtains and tapestries, and all other decorations must be non-combustible, fire rated, or treated with fire-retardant material
- vi) Open flames shall not be permitted in enclosed assembly areas

Prohibited Materials

The following items shall be prohibited within assembly areas:

- i) Compressed flammable gases
- ii) Flammable or combustible liquids
- iii) Hazardous chemicals or materials
- iv) Class II greater lasers, blasting agents, and explosives

Evacuation Assistants

In coordination with the EHSRM, there shall be persons designated as evacuation assistants who will be at the event for the entire duration and can serve to help evacuate the occupants in an orderly fashion in the event of an emergency. Event organizers are responsible for appointing evacuation assistants and ensuring that they attend fire safety and evacuation training provided by the EHSRM.

Designated evacuation assistants and alternates shall be appointed no later than 5 days in advance of event.

In assembly occupancies having occupant loads exceeding 250 persons, crowd managers shall be provided at a ratio of 2 crowd manager per every 250 persons.

Occupant Load (number of persons allowed in the building at one time)

The occupant load shall be determined by EHSRM utilizing the floor plans provided and the available floor space. Event organizers shall be responsible in ensuring occupant load is adhered to.

Notification

Prior to the commencement of activities an announcement will be made identifying the specific location of the exits, evacuation assistants, and assembly points outside of building.

Appendix B- Holiday and Decoration Fire Safety Guidelines

The following guidelines have been established by The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley – Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management for your safety, and are applicable in all university locations, including but not limited to residence halls, UTRGV owned or leased apartments, and buildings. Please review the guidelines before installing any decorations. If you have any questions, please contact the UTRGV EHSRM at 665-3690 (Edinburg campus) or 882-5934 (Brownsville campus).

General Decorations

- All lighting sets must bear UL listing tags. Lighting set guidelines are as follows:
- Lighting sets are prohibited to be hung over corridors.
 - Lighting sets shall not be hanged from the ceiling.
 - All lighting sets should be physically examined before use to detect frayed wiring and other conditions which might create a shock or fire hazard
 - Lighting sets may be utilized on artificial trees, or placed around room windows.
 - Lighting sets are prohibited around room doorways.
 - All lighting sets in rooms must be turned off when the room is unoccupied.
 - Lighting sets displayed on artificial trees located in lounges must be turned off when the room is unoccupied during hours of darkness.
 - If extension cords are used, they may not run through a door way, create a trip hazard, and must be disconnected when area is not occupied.
 - Lighting sets may not be in contact with draperies, paper, or combustible decorations.
 - All electric lighting sets must be removed from the resident hall when departing for Winter break.
- To prevent a fire from obstructing a means of egress, decorations with limited combustibility can cover up to 50 % of a door not in an exit corridor.
- To prevent a fire from obstructing a means of egress, decorations with limited combustibility can cover up to 20 % of a wall not in an exit corridor.

- Readily ignitable materials such as evergreen branches, boughs, hay bales, etc. are prohibited in hallways, corridors, stairwells, or other means of egress.
- Combustible material such as wrapping paper, fabrics, etc. are prohibited when fastened to doors as well as when attached to ceilings of corridors, stairways or other common areas designed as exit ways.
- Candles or any open flames in any form are prohibited.
- No decoration or tree may block any smoke detector, any fire alarm system component, and sprinkler, pull station, exit sign, emergency lighting or building fire equipment at any time.
- Combustible party decorations, gift wrappings, etc. must be disposed of promptly after use.
- Fire alarms apparatuses (fire extinguishers, pull stations etc., exit signs, emergency lights) shall not be blocked
- Holiday decorations shall not be hung on sprinkler heads for any reason or for any period of time.

Live Trees

Natural trees are only permitted with Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management approval and are allowed, provided the following criteria are met:

- The area is in a non-sleeping area protected by an automatic sprinkler system
- The natural tree is placed in an appropriate tree stand and the water level checked daily.
- Loose needles and other debris must be removed from the tree before it is displayed.
- Should the fresh tree dry out, as evidenced by falling needles, it must be removed from the building immediately.
- The tree may not obstruct any corridor, exit doorway, or other means of egress.

- The tree may not be located near any heating vent or other heating device which could cause the greenery to dry out prematurely.
- Only non-combustible trimmings are permitted.
- Only UL listed lighting sets may be used and they shall not be decorated with paper or other combustible materials. No overloading of electrical connections. Use UL approved surge protectors only.
- Trees should not extend beyond 18 inches from the ceiling.

Artificial Holiday Trees

Artificial holiday trees must bear Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) listing labels for fire resistance. Artificial trees meeting the following requirements are permitted in all areas, subject to the following safety guidelines.

- The artificial tree must be placed in a suitable stand to prevent it from falling.
- The tree may not obstruct any corridor, exit doorway, or other means of egress.
- No flammable decorations, combustible tree skirts or decorative gift packages may be placed on or under an artificial holiday tree except in an area protected by automatic sprinklers.
- Only UL listed lighting sets may be used and they shall not be decorated with paper or other combustible materials.
- Only non-combustible trimmings are permitted.
- Trees should not extend beyond 18 inches from the ceiling in a sprinklered building.
- Trees should not extend beyond 24 inches from the ceiling in a non-sprinklered building.