

HIGH RISE BUILDINGS

SAFETY & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

What is a high rise building?

The BC Building Code defines high rise buildings as those being seven storeys or more in height.

What actions must I take in a fire?

During a fire emergency, never attempt to leave a building by an elevator. Elevators may malfunction or become overloaded with people. In addition, fire fighters require designated elevators to carry them and their equipment to the floor below the fire.

In reacting to a fire in a high rise building, you must decide on **two** options:

- Do I leave the building to safety? **or**
- Is it safer to stay where I am?

What steps do I take when a fire is in my apartment or office?

- Alert everyone in your apartment or office.
- Leave immediately. Close but don't lock all doors behind you.
- When safe to do so, sound the fire alarm by activating a red manual pull station on the fire floor.
- **Call 9-1-1.** Never assume that someone else has already done so. Make sure you give your name, the correct address and location of the fire.
- Use the exit stairwells. **Don't use elevators.** Don't return until firefighters declare the apartment or office safe.

What steps do I take when I hear a fire alarm?

- **If you choose to leave the building:**
 - Leave as soon as possible.
 - Before opening any door, feel the door handle and the door itself, starting from the bottom, moving to the top. If the door is not hot, open it slightly.
 - If you see or smell smoke, or feel or hear air pressure or a hot draft, close the door quickly.
 - If the corridor is free of fire or smoke, take your keys, close the door behind you, and leave the building by the nearest exit stairwell, again closing all doors after you. **Do not use the elevator.**
 - If you encounter smoke in a stairwell, consider taking an alternate stairwell. Be sure to crawl low under smoke. If the alternate is also contaminated with smoke, return to your suite.

- If possible, render assistance to the elderly or physically challenged if they appear confused or are having difficulty.
- When you are safely outside call 9-1-1. Never assume that someone else has already done so. Make sure you give your name, the correct address and location of the fire.

If you cannot leave your apartment/office or have returned to it because of fire or heavy smoke:

- Close, but don't lock any doors so that firefighters are able to enter.
- Seal all cracks where smoke can enter by using wet towels or sheets. Seal mail slots, transoms and ventilation outlets as necessary (a roll of wide duct tape is handy).
- Move to the balcony or to the most protected room and partially open a window for air. Close the window if smoke enters.
- Keep low to the floor as heat and toxic gases rise.
- If you have access to a phone, call 9-1-1 and update the Burnaby Fire Department as to your location and condition.
- Wait to be rescued. Remain calm. Don't panic or jump.
- Listen for instructions or information from authorized personnel over the building's internal speaker system.

High rise building fire safety concerns

High rise buildings are designed to be fire-safe. However, because of the tremendous size of these buildings and the number of people they contain, emergency response is challenging with significant potential for major incidents.

Due to equipment limitations, firefighters cannot rescue people from an outside balcony or window above the seventh floor. Also, a rooftop helicopter rescue is too dangerous. Firefighters must do interior firefighting and rescue tactics.

As an occupant, how am I protected from fire?

- **Fire-resistant construction**
High rise buildings are designed to be more fire-safe than an average single-family dwelling. Floors and ceilings are constructed with fire-resistant materials and are separated into fire compartments. The compartments act as barriers to resist fire from spreading.
- **Fire alarm system**
High rise buildings contain a fire alarm system designed to alert occupants when activated. Types of fire alarm devices include smoke detectors, thermal detectors and sprinkler flow switches. If you discover a fire, immediately activate a red manual pull station near a stairwell and leave the floor. This will identify the specific location at the lobby alarm panel to responding firefighters. Your fire alarm system is not connected to

the Fire Services. **You must always call 9-1-1.** Make sure you give your name, the correct address and location of the fire.

- **Stairway fire escapes**

High rise buildings have interior fire-separated stairwell shafts. Signs should be posted within stairwells indicating which floor level you are on, and also identify the nearest crossover floors, if certain floors are not accessible. If you encounter smoke while descending a stairwell, you can crossover to an alternate stairwell. Keep stairwell doors closed at all times to preserve the safety of these escape stairs.

- **Interior water supplies**

High rise buildings contain an interior water supply system called a standpipe system which consists of fire hose cabinets on each floor for use by firefighters. High rise buildings may also be sprinklered. All buildings have portable fire extinguishers on every floor.

In case of fire or an emergency, call 9-1-1.