

TRAINING BULLETIN NUMBER 57
EVACUATION GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

During its proud history, the Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) has responded to and effectively abated a multitude of emergency incidents that have required evacuation of civilians for the purpose of public safety. This Department has an outstanding tradition in responding to emergencies and providing for not only the physical needs, but the emotional needs of the civilians we serve. The public has grown to expect more from its public servants and organizations than has previously been demanded by past generations. Today, it is simply not enough to respond to and handle the physical properties and considerations of an emergency incident. Evacuation is an upsetting experience, regardless of the nature of the emergency. It is important that we, as emergency responders, consider the needs of the persons being evacuated. The very act of being greeted at your door by a member of the Fire or Police Department and advised of the necessity for evacuation can be extremely stressful.

The community needs to be provided with as much information as possible regarding the incident including:

- The reason for the evacuation;
- The evacuation route;
- Their ultimate destination; and
- Contingency plans for the safekeeping of their personal property and pets.

It is not sufficient to advise the public that a state of emergency exists and that it is necessary to vacate their residence. The Fire Department, once in charge, has the ultimate responsibility of providing for the personal needs of civilians.

The purpose of these evacuation guidelines is to provide Incident Commanders with general considerations for effective evacuation operations. It is not intended to be a comprehensive document. However, it should serve as a reminder for those Officers charged with the evacuation responsibility of those major points to be considered and additional assistance to be rendered to the evacuation effort by other agencies.

MISSION STATEMENT/OBJECTIVE

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) share concurrent jurisdiction in emergencies involving evacuations within the city of Los Angeles. The authority for both agencies to close an area and order an evacuation is found in: Penal Code Section 409.5, Los Angeles City Charter Sections 131 and 132, Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 57.01.21, and Los Angeles Administrative Code Section 22.224. Notwithstanding the authority vested in both departments by these codes, the practical matter is that evacuations are managed better by the agency charged with primary control responsibility.

These evacuation guidelines are designed to be generic in nature; and to be applicable to all possible evacuation scenarios including a hazardous materials release, flood with inundation of specific neighborhoods, brush fire, earthquake, or any catastrophic occurrence. These guidelines are intended to organize mass evacuation within the scope of the Incident Command System.

An important consideration in the evacuation process is that, regardless of which agency has specific legal responsibility for the evacuation, the agency that actually calls for the evacuation will ultimately bear the responsibility for the effectiveness of that effort. Knowledge of specific capabilities of City agencies will assist the Incident Commander and Evacuation Division Commander in providing effective coverage. These evacuation guidelines specify certain responsibilities that lie in the purview of other agencies.

It is not enough for the Evacuation Division Commander to assume that responsible agencies will effectively discharge their designated responsibilities. Concurrent participation by Department staff is required. Specifically, each major control point must be staffed by a Department Officer in order to assure communication and coordination. The Incident Commander must be apprised of routes, shelters, locations, and changing needs.

The Department's ultimate goal in the evacuation process is to effectively move civilians to a safe location. Additionally, the

Department shall assure that those services necessary to provide a comfortable stay in an evacuation center are provided. Those services and the evacuation center itself are the specific responsibilities of other agencies such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and Department of Recreation of Parks. It may be necessary for the Fire Department to initiate action to provide necessary service.

I. EVACUATION DIVISION COMMAND STRUCTURE

The Evacuation Division Command structure is being established as part of the Incident Command System for the purpose of reassigning the responsibility for the evacuation process. The Incident Commander is charged with the primary responsibility of abatement of the incident. Evacuation is such a specific and politically impacting operation that full consideration of a separate, accountable Incident Command Division is required. This function will be provided through the organization of an Evacuation Division which will report directly to Operations.

II. ESTABLISH EVACUATION DIVISION

A. Location

Safety is the single most important consideration in choosing a location for the Evacuation Division. Consideration must be given to prevent disruption caused by a relocation of the Evacuation Division due to encroachment of the hazard associated with the incident.

B. Separation

The Evacuation Division should be separate from the Incident Command Post. It is of vital importance that the Evacuation Division be located within a reasonable distance of the Incident Command Post in order to facilitate face-to-face communication. It should not be so close as to interfere with abatement of the emergency.

C. Communications

The Evacuation Division Commander determines site assessment, safe routes, and separation of responsibility based upon direction of the officer in charge. Without effective and clear communication with the Incident Commander, the parameters of the evacuation area will be incorrect. Early estimates must include the number of evacuees.

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1. Incident Commander

As soon as possible following the decision to evacuate, the Evacuation Division Commander shall report in person to the Operations Commander. The Incident Commander is responsible for establishing and announcing the boundaries of the evacuation area. Feedback from the Evacuation Division Commander is necessary prior to the evacuation order. This announcement should be clarified by using area maps that delineate the evacuation area. Follow-up communication which update or change boundaries will be required as conditions change.

2. LAPD

Officers from the LAPD will be charged with the responsibility of evacuating only those areas not requiring special protection (breathing apparatus, entry suits, etc.). The officer in charge of the LAPD forces should meet with the Evacuation Division Commander as soon as the evacuation area has been delineated. Again, personal communication using Department maps is the most effective means of conveying this information. The Evacuation Division Commander shall maintain a LAPD liaison at the Evacuation Division. This will ensure rapid communication if any change of conditions impacts upon the safety or the mission of the Police Officers.

3. The Public

Communication with the public is essential to the successful evacuation of a neighborhood. Special consideration must be given to the language preference of the area. When fire companies check into staging, the Captain shall inform the Staging Officer who shall in turn notify the Resource Status Officer of the availability of multi-lingual personnel assigned.

4. Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

It is of paramount importance to activate the EOC when evacuation considerations warrant and/or are in accordance with criteria established by the Emergency operations Board (EOB). The EOC is the nucleus of effective interagency coordination and cooperation. Once activated, the EOC will bring together the resources of local government to effectively respond to the incident.

a. Department of Recreation and Parks

The Department of Recreation and Parks has primary responsibility for coordinating the management of evacuation centers. Effective September 1988, the General Manager of the Department of Recreation and Parks was appointed a member of the EOB. As the primary Manager of an evacuation shelter, it is the Department of Recreation and Parks' responsibility to coordinate the effort of all agencies that provide service at an evacuation shelter.

Additionally, the Department of Recreation and Parks has the duty to notify all concerned agencies of the evacuation center's location and the services required of each agency. The earliest possible notification of the Department of Recreation, and Parks through the operations Control Dispatch Section (OCDS) will initiate the mobilization of this important function.

b. Red Cross/Salvation Army

Essential to the success of an evacuation center is the response of the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army. These two agencies will provide the evacuees with services that are required at the evacuation center including food, beverages, clothing, etc. It is necessary that they are called upon early to make timely arrangements.

They will need to know the approximate number of adults, children, and invalids requiring service. Although it is the Department of Recreation and Parks' responsibility to activate the services of the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army, it is important that the Evacuation Division Commander verify that this has been done.

c. Los Angeles Unified School District-(LAUSD)

The Department of Recreation and Parks has entered into a written agreement with the LAUSD to use their facilities, when available, as evacuation centers. Availability is an important consideration. As a practicable application, these facilities will not be available during school hours. The decision whether to use a LAUSD facility as an evacuation center lies primarily with the Department of Recreation and Parks.

Strong consideration should be given to using high schools since these facilities make excellent evacuation centers. The gymnasium provides a large area for use as a dormitory. All high schools are provided with a kitchen which is stocked with an emergency three-day supply of food. Restroom facilities are provided which are usually adequate for a substantial number of evacuees. Additionally, the athletic field area-provides open space for a pet holding area. School offices with

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telephones are ideal for various
evacuation functions.

d. Department of Animal Regulation

Probably the most overlooked function that occurs during any mass evacuation is a provision for the evacuees' pets. Whenever possible, evacuees should be encouraged to bring their pets with them. Pets are subject to the same hazards as people. The Department of Animal Regulation will respond, as requested, to an evacuation incident and provide assistance in the evacuation of animals. Additionally, the Department of Animal Regulation will provide needed emergency medical care for pets once they reach the holding compound. An integral part of the evacuation effort should be communication and coordination with the Department of Animal Regulation, through Operations Control Dispatch Section and Emergency Operations Center.

5. OCDS

Communication with OCDS is essential to any evacuation effort. OCDS will provide direct contact with the EOC. A telephone line connection into OCDS from the field will reduce radio traffic during the incident. A mobile cellular telephone is ideal for this function.

III. EVACUATION PRE-PLANNING

A. Estimated Area of Evacuation

The immediate area of evacuation must be established by the Incident Commander. A more exact area of evacuation will be determined by the Incident Commander using a multitude of data and expertise provided by the Computer-Assisted Management of Emergency Operations (CAMEO) computer and the Hazardous Materials Specialist from the Hazardous Materials Response Unit (HMRU). In addition, the Incident Commander will be able to project additional areas of exposure using the computer system. This information will be discussed with the Evacuation Division Commander to provide depth in developing the overall evacuation plan.

B. Type of Evacuation

The severity of the hazardous materials release, estimated duration of the hazard, and nature of the incident will determine the method and type of evacuation. The three most common types of evacuation are sheltering in place, voluntary evacuation, and mandatory evacuation.

1. Sheltering in Place

The concept of sheltering in place is a viable option in those instances where the hazardous materials release will be of short duration and physical evacuation is counterproductive. This procedure may be effective for large hospitals, convalescent homes, and other facilities which house a high percentage of nonambulatory persons who would be adversely impacted by the evacuation process.

Sheltering in place attempts to provide a safe haven within the occupancy. It involves shutting off the outside air supply to a facility, closing all doors and windows, and waiting for the hazard to pass. The decision to shelter in place is made by the Incident Commander based on specific, quantifiable data obtained by computer modeling (CAMEO) and with technical expertise provided by the Hazardous Materials Specialist at the scene of the incident.

2. Voluntary Evacuation

Voluntary evacuation would more commonly be ordered in a brush fire or earthquake. In less immediate hazardous situations where a homeowner, or occupant, desires the latitude to stay in place and protect their property, consideration must be given to their wishes. It is the Evacuation Division Commander's responsibility to apprise the civilian of the potential risk. Each civilian must be given information, direction, and assistance, if required and available.

3. Mandatory Evacuation

Mandatory evacuation is reserved for incidents of extreme severity or imminent life loss. Mandatory evacuation involves complete removal of all civilians from a given area. Hopefully, this evacuation order will be complied with willingly by all persons involved. If the hazardous condition warrants forcible removal of civilians from their homes, it may be necessary for the LAPD to make arrests. Animals must be considered during this type of evacuation.

c. Estimated Number of Evacuees

Evacuation pre-planning by the Evacuation Division Commander must consider the number of evacuees to be moved, the means, direction, and final destination. An accurate estimate of the number of persons involved in an evacuation is an extremely difficult task. A city block in one geographical area of Los Angeles cannot be compared to another city block in a separate area. Some blocks contain as many as 30 or 40 small homes occupied by many family members. In other geographical areas of the City, blocks contain only a few large homes, which may be occupied by only two or three persons. These demographic differences must be evaluated prior to estimation of numbers.

D. Designated Travel Routes

Designated travel routes should be pre-planned and clearly communicated to all evacuees. Pre-planning of evacuation routes will allow an orderly evacuation. Once the various travel routes have been established, they should be marked on the area map and clearly communicated to members of the LAPD and the Department of Transportation (DOT). It is the Evacuation Division Commander's responsibility to assure that designated travel routes are monitored during the evacuation process.

E. Traffic Control

The Department of Transportation has responsibility for traffic control. During evacuation pre-planning, adequate resources must be requested from DOT to accomplish control. A ranking member of DOT is valuable for assistance for the Evacuation Division Commander. This supervisor will assist with placement, relief, and communication with DOT personnel. The supervisor must be provided with necessary information to estimate the resources needed and place an early call for additional resources, if required. In addition, the DOT representative should be provided with an estimated duration of the evacuation and of the incident itself.

F. Security for Evacuated Area

Security for the evacuated area will be provided by the LAPD. It should not be assumed that the same officers who provide the evacuation notification to the civilians will necessarily remain in the neighborhood to provide security. This protection should be verified with the LAPD Liaison Officer assigned to the Evacuation Division.

G. Evacuation Center Location

Establishment of the evacuation center location is a function of the Department of Recreation and Parks. It will be the responsibility of the Evacuation Division Commander to apprise that agency; first, of the general region for the evacuation center and, second, of any limiting factors or unusual considerations which may impact upon the ultimate location of that facility. If the Emergency Operations Center is activated, this will be done through Operations Control Dispatch Section. It is, however, entirely possible that an evacuation may be ordered prior to such communication with the Department of Recreation and Parks. In those cases, a pre-planned evacuation center will need to be activated unilaterally by the LAFD. The importance of making a correct decision in establishing an evacuation center cannot be overemphasized due to the negative impact of relocation upon the evacuees. Pre-planned casualty collection points should be considered.

IV. EVACUATION ORDER (SHARED LAPD/LAFD RESPONSIBILITY)

The LAPD has deferred the authority and responsibility for evacuation in those emergency incidents in which the Fire Department is properly the lead agency. The practical ramifications of an evacuation do, however, dictate that the evacuation order be done in concert with the LAPD whenever possible. Officers of the LAPD will be an integral part of the evacuation notification process in those areas not requiring protective equipment.

A. Notification/Instructions

Ideally, public notification of a pending or immediate evacuation should be accompanied by specific information. Civilians are entitled to know the reason that they are being asked to evacuate their homes. They also need advice. Detailed information must be accessible at the evacuation center. Consequently, members of the Evacuation Team should be provided with current information. Consideration must be given to the language preference of those persons being evacuated. In those areas of the City where a specific language other than English is commonly used, it is of the utmost importance that at least one member of each Evacuation Team be fluent in that language.

1. Public Notification

It is important that bilingual personnel who have responded to an incident that requires evacuation be identified. The Company Commander shall make that information known upon arrival at staging. The Resource Status Leader will record that information for later use.

a. LAFD Inside the Exposure Area

If the severity of a given incident requires the use of protective equipment, such as breathing apparatus, and an evacuation has been ordered, it will be necessary to use LAFD personnel to canvas the area and provide assistance to the residents. The LAPD has emphasized its dependence upon the LAFD Incident Commander in determining the parameters of those areas. It would be unacceptable to place a Police officer in an area requiring protective equipment.

b. LAPD Outside the Exposure Area

The safe area outside the primary exposure area will be an LAPD responsibility in an evacuation. Police officers will operate within the boundaries approved by the Incident Commander only. Police Officer Evacuation Teams should be given specific instruction to provide the citizens with correct information regarding the evacuation, procedure, routes, and location of the Evacuation Center.

c. Electronic Media

(Emergency Broadcast System)

The Emergency Broadcast System can be activated through the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. If the EOC has been activated, the EOC will serve-as a communications link to the Emergency Broadcast System. The content of the evacuation order must assist the evacuation process rather than create confusion. Self-evacuation outside the evacuation area may occur, if exact boundaries are not defined. For example, general terms like "West Los Angeles" or "the Valley" would add confusion and become counterproductive.

d. Multi-Lingual Handout

With Evacuation Instructions

The Evacuation Division Commander can effectively use multi-lingual handouts with specific evacuation instructions for the public. The Disaster Preparedness Division is in the process of developing a generic type of evacuation handout that will be available upon request through OCDS during an evacuation.

2. Notification of Elected Officials

Timely notification of the elected officials within the City of Los Angeles cannot be overemphasized. It is prudent to involve them in the evacuation process early so that they have first-hand information of the evacuation need and criteria. This inclusion will allow the elected officials to more accurately respond to civilians' concerns. In a situation where the EOC has been activated, such notification will be automatic. In those cases where an evacuation is being conducted without activation of EOC, it may be necessary for the incident Commander to request notification of the Mayor and Council Offices through OCDS.

a. Mayor's Office

If the EOC has been activated, the Mayor will generally respond to EOC and take command of operations there. In his' absence, the Chief of Police will direct the activities of EOC. The Mayor's Office should be informed through OCDS of the location of the Incident Command Post and the name of the Incident Commander. Should the Mayor or one of his Deputies arrive at the Command Post, a Liaison officer shall be assigned to provide an update of the situation.

b. Council Office

As in the case with the Mayor and his staff, early notification of the affected Council Office(s) of an evacuation is extremely important. Involving the Councilperson in the evacuation gives them an opportunity to solve sensitive issues and become a part of the total effort. Council Offices should be advised of the location of the Incident Command Post and, most importantly, the evacuation center. This access will allow Council personnel to make early contact with the people in their Council Districts. Council offices will coordinate notification and involvement of local neighborhood associations.

c. Community Response-Teams

The Community Response Teams have been or are being trained by the Disaster Preparedness Division. These pre-trained Response Teams can be used in a variety of safe area assignments including: set up of the evacuation center, staffing information areas, and assisting DOT personnel. Once the EOC is functional, the Personnel and Recruit Division of the Personnel Department is responsible for Community Response Team personnel records.

V. TRANSPORTATION

A. Private Automobiles

Past experience in evacuations nationwide indicates that approximately 65 percent of all persons being evacuated as the result of an emergency incident used their private automobiles. This fact impacts on crowd and traffic control as discussed previously.

B. Southern California
Rapid Transit District (SCRTD) Buses

The Evacuation Division Commander may obtain the use of SCRTD buses for mass evacuation for civilians. The SCRTD has indicated that they can provide buses to the transportation collection points within 45 minutes. An estimate of the number of the persons needing such transportation is essential for the SCRTD response. Notification of transportation and collection points must be made available to all evacuees requiring transportation. Los Angeles Unified School District buses may also be used. These buses may be requested through OCDS.

C. Invalid Transportation

It is very important that disabled citizens be clearly identified by LAFD and LAPD Evacuation Notification Teams. Consideration should first be given to the feasibility of sheltering these individuals in place. If that is not a viable option, then consideration should be given to the use of appropriate vehicles and personnel to provide the necessary evacuation when time is of the essence. Time and environmental conditions permitting, Los Angeles County and private ambulance transportation is available. The decision whether to transport individuals to the evacuation center or to the nearest medical facility will be made by the ambulance personnel or the Medical Group Commander on an individual basis.

D. Decontamination of Civilians

Under certain conditions, it may become necessary to decontaminate civilians who were exposed to hazardous materials outside of the incident perimeter control line. When this situation occurs it will be necessary to request an additional Hazardous Materials Task Force through the Incident Commander. A separate Hazardous Materials Group and Site Control Team will need to be organized under the line authority of the Operations Commander. If the decontamination trailer is available, consideration should be given to using it for civilian decontamination because of the privacy it affords the users.

VI. EVACUATION CENTER/SHELTER

A. Location (Department of Recreation and Parks)

The importance of selecting an appropriate location for an evacuation center has been discussed earlier in this document under "Evacuation Planning" and is the primary responsibility of the Department of Recreation and Parks. Specific information will be provided in this section to enable the Evacuation Division Commander to understand the procedure and considerations in shelter activation. It is the responsibility of the Griffith Park Chief Ranger from the Griffith Park Ranger Station to provide personnel to physically open up the facility selected as the evacuation center. The Park Ranger assigned to the shelter will either secure keys for the facility or perform whatever forcible entry is required to open the facility to the public.

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B. Facilities (Department of Recreation and Parks)

Depending on the shelter location, many facilities required for the evacuees may already be in place, i.e., local high schools. Additionally, it will be necessary for the Department of Recreation and Parks to manage other services that will require the response of specific agencies. The telephone company has the capability to provide trailerable telephone banks that can be set up for convenience and use of evacuees. Additional restrooms may be required depending on the size of the evacuation center.

c. Services (Red Cross/Salvation Army)

Specific functions, such as feeding, clothing, and other personal services will most likely be provided by the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army. It will be the Department of Recreation and Park's responsibility to provide coordination with the rendering agencies.

It is important that the Evacuation Division Commander monitor the evacuation center to assure that needed services are provided.

One specific service that should be provided at any evacuation center is a standby LAFD Paramedic ambulance capable of monitoring the condition of elderly and ill evacuees. It would be advisable to have an Emergency Medical Services Bureau Supervisor respond to the evacuation center for the purpose of assessing the situation. Evacuations resulting from hazardous materials releases would greatly increase the medical priorities. A Hospital Emergency Response Team (HERT) may be requested through OCDS, if needed.

D. Public Information

It is very important that the LAFD have a Chief Officer, PIO, and personnel with multi-lingual capability at the evacuation center to provide current informational updates for the evacuees. The PIO should consider use of area maps and appropriate graphs to visually inform the displaced citizens. This information will also be appreciated by those community leaders who have responded to the evacuation center.

VII. POST-EVACUATION CONSIDERATIONS/DEMOBILIZATION

It is essential that post-evacuation activities and demobilization be as carefully planned as the actual evacuation. It is not sufficient to merely appear at the evacuation center and announce, "It's OK to go home folks." A clear statement relative to the safety of their neighborhood must be presented to the evacuees by a ranking member of the LAFD. Those people without transportation must be directed to transportation collection points where they will be picked up and delivered to a location within walking distance of their homes. The Department's objective is to leave the evacuees with a positive feeling about their experience.

Civilians should receive literature that contains information from the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services regarding residual hazards and a hot line telephone number for additional information.

A. Transmission of "All Clear" Order

It is the Incident Commander's responsibility to transmit the "all clear" order. Ideally, this should be done through a joint meeting of all agencies involved. If the EOC has been activated, it would become the most appropriate vehicle for this communication. It will be the responsibility of the Incident Commander in conjunction with the Evacuation Division Commander to assure that the details of evacuation demobilization are in motion. It would be logical to use the same checklist as was used for planning the evacuation to assure for complete demobilization.

CONCLUSION

The information provided here is not intended to address all possible events that could occur during an evacuation. It is intended to serve as a guide for the evacuation procedure.

Evacuation can be a major problem, in and of itself. It requires the full-time attention of an experienced Field Commander. His/her creativity and ingenuity in meeting the social and political needs of an evacuation effort are of paramount importance.