

NEW YORK STATE

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

40 NORTH PEARL STREET, ALBANY, NEW YORK 12243-0001

CESAR A. PERALES  
Commissioner



**INFORMATIONAL LETTER**

TRANSMITTAL NO: 87 INF-62

TO: Commissioners of Social Services  
Executive Directors

DIVISION: Family & Children Services

SUBJECT: Recommended Procedure for Fire Drills,  
Publication #1095 (6/87)

DATE: November 20, 1987

SUGGESTED  
DISTRIBUTION:

Social Services District  
Child Placement Agencies  
Child Welfare Supervisors  
Day Care Centers  
Staff Development Coordinators

CONTACT PERSON:

Any questions about the release should be directed to the following Fire Safety Inspectors: Burleigh Little, Buffalo Regional Office, 716-847-3145; William Shaw, Eastern Regional Office, 518-473-1174; Sidney Elmo, Metropolitan Regional Office, 212-488-3605; Thomas Caufield, Rochester Regional Office, 716-238-8192.

I. Purpose

The purpose of this release is to advise authorized agencies and day care centers of the Department's booklet, Recommended Procedure for Fire Drills, Publication #1095 (6/87).

FILING REFERENCES

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Department Regs.	Social Services Law and Other Legal References	Manual References	Miscellaneous Reference
86 ADM 12	18 NYCRR 444.5(b)(16) 443.3(i) 444.8(b)(3)	LIBRARY TEN EYCK BLDG. 10-D ALBANY, NY		403	

DSS-329 (Rev. 1/87)

II. Background

Recommended Procedure for Fire Drills is a revised edition of a booklet that has been available since 1970. It has assisted authorized agencies and day care centers in conducting effective fire drills.

III. Program Implications

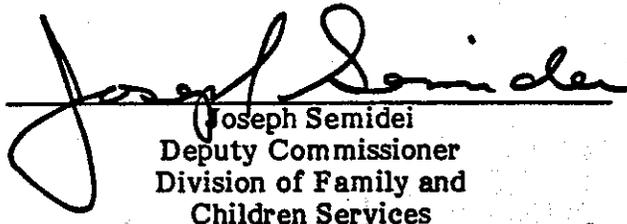
- A. The booklet can assist each agency in achieving the goal of all fire drills: to assure the prompt and safe evacuation from agency buildings by residents, students, and staff.
- B. Interest in learning fire drill procedures and duties will be promoted by distribution of the booklet to all agency staff.
- C. Review of the booklet in conferences/meetings will help all staff to be prepared for scheduled fire drills.

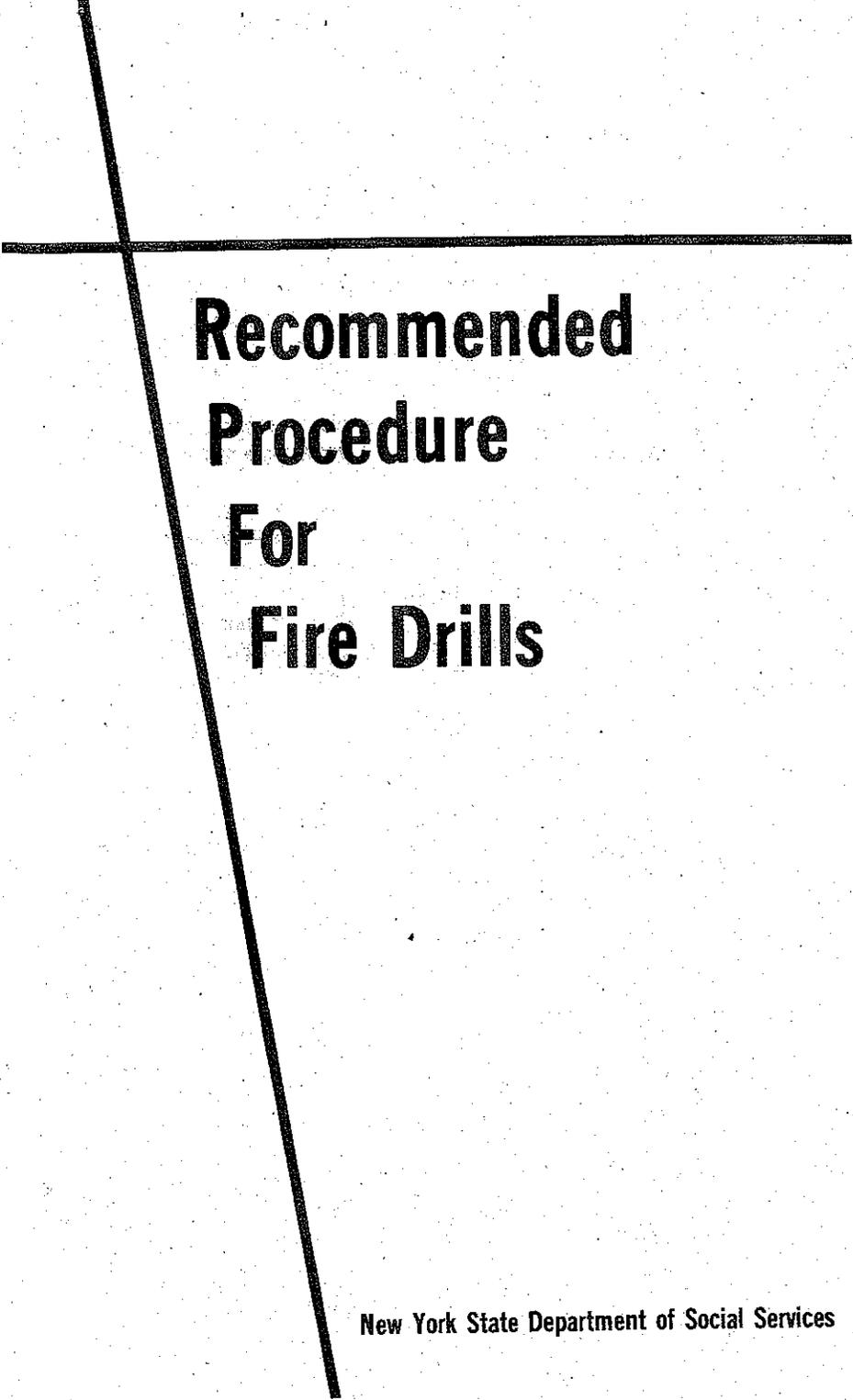
IV. Recommended Actions

- A. Provide all staff members of residential programs, and day care centers with copies of the booklet.
- B. Establish the practice of reviewing duties and procedures with staff prior to a fire drill and evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of staff following each drill.

V. Additional Information

- A. Request technical assistance of the Department's fire safety inspectors in the regional offices if there are any questions about fire drill procedures.
- B. Attached is a single copy of Recommended Practices for Fire Drills. Additional copies may be ordered from the Forms and Publications Clerk, NY State Department of Social Services, 40 North Pearl Street, Albany, New York 12243.

  
Joseph Semidei  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Family and  
Children Services



**Recommended  
Procedure  
For  
Fire Drills**

**New York State Department of Social Services**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In an emergency — a fire — the most potent factor in saving lives is an effective and efficient program to get staff and children out of the building. Confusion, ignorance or unfamiliarity with fire drill procedure cannot be tolerated in a fire emergency.

This booklet provides an orientation for administrative, program, and residential staff in both public and private child-caring facilities on fire drill procedures.

Fire drills may be regarded as an inconvenience but will be accepted and used constructively by participants when they are part of an ongoing program aimed at building positive attitudes toward fire safety and fire prevention.

## RECOMMENDED PROCEDURE FOR FIRE DRILLS

### I. Legal Requirements

#### A. Regulations on Fire Drills (Mandated)

##### 1. *Child Caring Institutions — Regulation 442.5*

###### a. Evacuation of Buildings

A definite plan of evacuation of buildings with printed procedures to be followed in case of fire shall be posted in conspicuous places throughout the institution.

###### b. Fire Drills

Fire drills shall be held at different times during the day and night and as often as is needed to familiarize and instruct children and staff with the routine, but no less often than once in each 60-day period. A fire drill census, taken at each drill, shall be checked against the daily or bedtime census. A written record of all fire drills shall be kept on file for a one year period.

##### 2. *Group Homes — Regulation 448.3(d)(10)*

- a. Children and staff shall be instructed at regular intervals in evacuation of the building.

##### 3. *Family Day Care Homes — Regulation 417.8*

- a. There shall be fire safety precautions established, and quarterly fire drills shall take place so that each child is made aware of the precautions.

##### 4. *Day Care Centers — Regulation 418.10*

- a. The day care center shall obtain a fire inspection at least annually by local or state fire officials, and a record thereof shall be kept. The director or designated qualified staff member shall conduct monthly inspections of the premises to observe possible fire hazards. Any such hazard shall be corrected immediately.

**B. Local Laws and Ordinances**

**C. Schools (where applicable) — Education Law, Section 807.**

**II. Frequency of Fire Drills**

**A. Child-caring Institutions**

1. 6 drills per year
  - a. At least two (2) using fire escapes, where provided.

**B. Schools**

1. 12 drills per school year
  - a. 8 between September 1 and December 1 each year
  - b. 4 thereafter, except two (2) more in summer sessions.
2.  $\frac{1}{3}$  using fire escapes, where provided
3. At least four (4) additional drills if sleeping accommodations are provided in school building
  - a. Drills to be held between sunset and sunrise

**C. Day Care Centers**

1. Monthly

**D. Group Homes**

1. Regular instruction of staff and children

**III. Fire Department Notification**

**A. Telephone**

1. Name and number of fire department at each telephone

2. Staff trained to accurately inform fire department or switchboard operator
  - a. Name of institution
  - b. Location of building on institution grounds
  - c. His or her name

**B. Fire Alarm Box**

1. Know location of nearest alarm or building pull box.
2. Delegate responsible member of staff on each shift to pull box in event of fire.

**IV. Signals (suggested)**

**A. Regular Alarm**

1. Steady ringing

**B. Recall**

1. 1 steady long bell of 30 seconds

**C. Testing**

1. Fire alarm system should be tested once each week. This is a responsibility of the maintenance staff.

A drill will constitute a test of the system for that week.

**D. Records**

1. A record must be kept by the administrative office giving the date and hour of each drill and the time taken to evacuate the building.
2. A record of each fire alarm test must be kept in the administrative office.
  - a. Day care centers are required to keep a record of fire drills on forms that are supplied by the State Department of Social Services.
  - b. Institutions are required to keep a written record of fire drills on file for one year.

V. Principles and Procedures for Fire Drills

- A. All personnel and visitors must leave the building regardless of the activities in which they are engaged or as soon as their assigned duties in the drill are completed.
- B. Speed should be subordinate to control and order. There shall be no talking, running, pushing or skipping steps on stairs.
  - 1. Buildings should be cleared in not more than two minutes from time of alarm.
- C. All residents should stop work immediately. Children in shops, laboratories, etc. should turn off motors, torches, gas, and water outlets, etc. in accordance with prearranged plan. This should be checked by the adult in charge.
- D. Adults and children should not stop to take books, wraps or other personal belongings. (Exception: valuables immediately accessible — such as purses.)
- E. The first person to reach any door should open and hold it open until his group has passed through. Transfer will then be made to the first person of the next group who will repeat the procedure.
- F. The houseparent or teacher should take cottage or group census or class attendance record, and proceed with group.
- G. The last one to leave a room should check to be sure everyone is out and should then close the door.
- H. Adults and children should proceed to assigned places on grounds or sidewalks away from buildings.
  - 1. Anyone in lavatories or otherwise out of their rooms should join the nearest lines in making exit: proceed to the stopping place, then with permission of those in charge of this group, join their own group and report to the person in charge, then take place in line.
  - 2. In no case should any group stop less than twenty-five (25) feet from a building.

3. Groups should not stop in front of gates nor other entrances that might be used by the fire department, nor closer than fifteen (15) feet of a fire hydrant.
- I. Egress from rooms on upper floors should be so distributed that each stairway accommodates a proportionate share of pupil traffic. (Exception: when one stairway is blocked by smoke or flames or intentionally closed for practice.)

## VI. Variations in Fire Drills

- A. Alternate the method of giving the alarm between the automatic and manual emergency system.
- B. Vary the manner in which the drills are conducted.
  1. Execute drills at different hours of the day or evening without advance notice. They should be executed at such irregular times as would tend to destroy any possible distinction between drills and time of actual fire. In each classroom, cottage or other building, cards of instruction should be posted conspicuously, describing the procedure for drills and exit routes.
    - a. This procedure should be developed and posted by the institution administration for each building occupied or used by children and staff.
  2. Blocked exit drills should be given in which the customary exit or mode of egress is unavailable. The usual procedure is that the administrator or custodian places a sign reading "EXIT BLOCKED" at the head of the stair or in front of an exit, which indicates to the children the nonavailability of that particular exit or stairway.
    - a. Hand Signals
      - (1) When the leader comes to a blocked exit, he should raise one or both hands above his head and stop. Each child, or staff member, in the line should duplicate this hand signal and stop.

- (2) The leader should then name, and lead the group to the alternate exit.
  - (i) Hand signal should be held until the alternate exit is named and the leader drops his hand.
3. Auditorium drills should be given according to a prearranged plan.

## VII. Staff Assignments

### A. Administrator's Duties

1. The administrator or his delegated representatives is responsible for the supervision of the fire drill and should make definite assignments to make certain that all rooms, auditoriums, and lavatories are evacuated.
2. He should set up procedures to protect the institution's vital records, where possible. Again, the lives of staff and children are paramount.
3. In case of actual fire, the administrator or his delegated representative(s) should phone an outside (non-institution) fire department or other designated emergency numbers when the need for such assistance is imperative.
4. The administrator should make known to the staff the location of fire alarms and fire fighting equipment.
5. Proper training in the use of fire alarms, extinguishers and stand pipe hose should be given to all staff personnel.

### B. Custodian or Maintenance Personnel

1. They may try to extinguish the fire with available equipment.
2. Should man and control all valves — sprinkler, hydrant or gas — and open or close them as ordered by the institution or department fire chief.

### C. Duties of Child Care Staff

1. They should know the location of the fire alarm(s) for the building(s) to which they are assigned.

2. Should supervise the exit of their group and make certain it is performed in an orderly manner. (No talking, running, pushing or skipping steps on the stairs, etc.)
3. In a blocked exit, (drill or actual fire), they should know the alternate exit and should guide or instruct the class as to the course to take. Their positions should be where maximum control can be obtained over the group.
4. Should pick up daily census record or class register and proceed with the group.
5. Should guide the group to its designated position on the grounds, after which the roll should be taken to ascertain that all members of the cottage or class are present. They should remain with the group for further instructions.
6. If a child is missing at roll call, it is imperative for the teacher or child care worker to tell the administrator immediately about the missing child. The administrator should take immediate steps to locate the child and initiate a rescue mission if necessary.

#### VIII. Public Relations

- A. The administrator should have a plan for informing the public about any fire that occurs.
  1. This should be done through
    - a. the agency administrator,
    - b. an agency representative authorized to release information; or
    - c. an official of the fire department.
  2. It is an extremely important phase in an emergency situation to avoid releasing information that is inaccurate, inconsistent, and misleading or that could be misinterpreted by the public.
- B. All child care agencies are required by department regulation to report orally "any fire in any facility operated by such agency which involved a fire department . . ." The oral report must be confirmed by a written report within 10 days.

**To request extra copies, write:**

Publications Clerk  
Department of Social Services  
40 North Pearl Street  
Albany, New York 12243

NEW YORK STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL SERVICES

Mario M. Cuomo, Governor  
Cesar A. Perales, Commissioner



