



Office of
Mental Health

Fire Safety Reference Guide for Supervised Community Residences

Booklet 1: *Self Preservation*



FIRE SAFETY REFERENCE GUIDE FOR SUPERVISED COMMUNITY RESIDENCES

Booklet 1: *Self-Preservation*

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This is Booklet 1 in a series of 5 booklets.

Other booklets include:

Booklet 2: *Evacuation Planning*

Booklet 3: *Fire Drills*

Booklet 4: *Fire Prevention*

Booklet 5: *Fire Safety Equipment*

*Developed by the NYS Office of Mental Health
Available online at www.omh.ny.gov*

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**Please note that this booklet is
a supplement to Basic Fire Safety Training.**

Staff are expected to participate in fire safety training before they use this booklet. This booklet is designed to reinforce materials presented during training and to provide samples/templates of forms associated with the topics discussed. It is recommended that fire safety training be provided at least annually.

The Office of Mental Health (OMH) in conjunction with the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and the Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) developed an on-line training program that can be used by agencies as a core for Basic Fire Safety Training. This training program for staff of supervised community residences is located at OMH.NY.GOV.

BOOKLET 1:

Self-Preservation



What is self-preservation?

It's the ability of an individual to evacuate a residence to a point of safety outside the home.

What is evacuation capacity?

It's the ability of residents to evacuate in combination with the amount of assistance provided by the staff.

Why is testing of an individual's ability to evacuate a home so important?

In case of an emergency, such as a fire, an individual's ability to safely and quickly exit can be the difference between life and death. Knowing ahead of time how someone might perform during an actual emergency will assist staff in determining the correct housing placement and, most importantly, allow staff to provide assistance where it may be needed.



What is the difference between self-preservation determination and self-preservation testing?

A self-preservation **determination** is a review of the a new applicant's history and a face-to-face interview, to determine if they have a capacity to evacuate equivalent to that of the general public. Self-preservation **testing** is conducted whenever you have uncertainty regarding the individual's ability to evacuate, using a timed drill for a more objective measurement.

In addition, self-preservation testing is done on an ongoing basis for all residents, through regularly conducted fire drills in accordance with Parts 594 and 595.



What are the requirements for community residences to determine an individual's self-preservation capability?

NY State regulations require the following:

- A determination of self-preservation must occur **Prior** to admission.
- Ongoing timed fire drills should be conducted regularly to evaluate individuals' level of evacuation capability.
- Evacuation capability should be based on the time of day or night when an evacuation would be the most difficult (e.g. during hours of sleep and/or when fewer staff are on duty)
- Whenever a resident or residents fail to evacuate the premises in the required time, a new test is required to be completed for that individual within 14 days.

How long can residents take to evacuate a residence?

For most of the community residences licensed by OMH the amount of time to evacuate is **3 minutes or less**. A residence that requires full evacuation within 3 minutes is classified as “Prompt”.

There are some OMH licensed residences where the evacuation time is **13 minutes or less**. A residence that requires full evacuation within 13 minutes is classified as “Slow Evacuating”. A home that falls under this designation has been constructed or renovated to include additional safety features that are intended to hold back the spread of fire and smoke.

Staff should confirm the classification of their community residence, which will either be prompt or slow.

Is testing a resident for self-preservation any different between a home classified as prompt or slow?

No. The test should be administered the same for either classification.



What does staff need to know before conducting a self-preservation test?

The layout for your residence including the location of all bedrooms and exits.

- The current evacuation plan. A house specific plan should be available in the residence. (Contents of the evacuation plan will be discussed under Objective 2 – Evacuation Planning)
- The content of the Self-Preservation test. (An example is included in this document)
- How the test is administered: It is recommended that staff assigned to conduct self-preservation tests observe two or more tests given by experienced staff.
- The home's evacuation classification. (Slow or prompt)

How should residents be oriented for self-preservation?

- Give a tour of the entire home including indoors and outdoors. During the tour point out the location of bedrooms and exits.
- Explain what is expected during a fire drill.

What is included in a self-preservation assessment?

- **A verbal test** to determine the resident's understanding and awareness of fire safety.
- **A functional test** to determine the actual skills the resident has to exit the building when an alarm is sounded, if there are any concerns that the person may not be able to evacuate.
- **A determination** as to the resident's self-preservation capability.



How should a functional test of self-preservation be conducted?

- Resident should be brought to a bedroom that he/she may be assigned.
- Resident should be instructed to wait in bedroom, with the door closed, until a fire alarm is sounded. The timing of the test begins when the alarm is sounded.
- Resident must exit the building upon hearing the alarm.
- Resident should meet a staff person outside the building at a predetermined spot. The timing of the test ends when the resident reaches the designated location.
- Repeat the above steps with the exception that the resident should use a secondary exit route.



What happens if the resident takes longer than the allowed time?

Staff can decide if the resident's performance might improve if they are retested. If so, staff should conduct a second test and observe the individual closely to see if verbal or physical prompts may be required, or if assistance is required to reach the designated meeting area.



Can staff use verbal or physical prompting to help residents?

Staff should provide as little intervention as possible during testing. Any type of verbal or physical prompting should be noted on the self-preservation form.

Limited verbal prompting should be restricted to simple directions. For example: reminding an individual to close the bedroom door, to move quickly, or not to look for a coat. Limited verbal prompting should not include: directing a person to get out of bed, verbally directing them to an exit, or coaching them to get to the meeting point.

Minimal physical prompting should be restricted to providing guidance by intermittently touching an arm, hand or shoulder. Minimal physical prompts should not include: assisting a person out of bed or physically steering them out of the residence.

All verbal and physical interventions used should be noted on the test form and must be factored in when determining self-preservation capability. In general, persons requiring more than limited verbal assistance or minimal physical assistance should not be placed in a home classified as "prompt".

What information is reviewed to determine if a person meets the homes evacuation standards?

- Their understanding of the dangers of fire and the need to exit quickly.
- Their ability to exit the building within the allowed time. (3 minutes for prompt and 13 minutes for slow)
- If any prompting was required.
- If they have any physical or psychological disabilities that may diminish their self-preservation capability.
- Availability of any alternatives to reduce the impact of problems noted. (e.g. 1st floor bedroom, extra staff on late shift, strobe lighting, alarm activated vibrator beds)

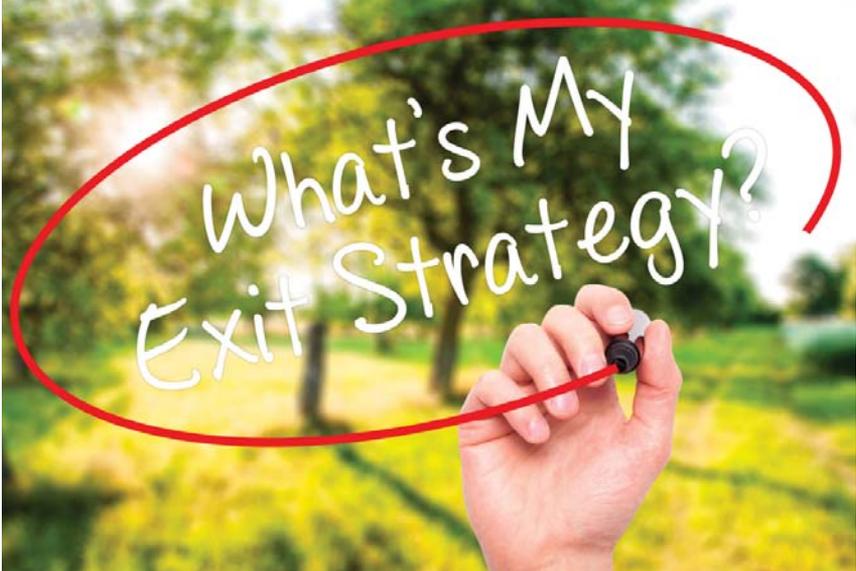
Who should verify the tester's determination?

It is recommended that an experienced staff person such as a house manager or program manager review each determination.



When would it make sense to use Life Safety Code to establish E-scores?

- If the facility has additional safety features (e.g. sprinkler system), physical plant features (e.g. bedrooms close to exits) and enriched staffing (e.g. night shift) there is a possibility that the residence, as a whole, may meet a prompt or slow classification. Using E-score results may allow some individuals, who did not outright meet the required timeframes, to remain in the home.
- Since determining E-scores is complicated, testing should only be completed by staff trained in the use of Life Safety Code NFPA 101A.
- E-score determinations need to be updated when there are changes in residents, staffing or the physical plant, as the scoring reflects the evacuation capability of the residents as a group.



Sample: *Capability of Self Preservation Determination*

This test is designed to determine an individual's ability to self-preserve at the residential placement location prior to admission or relocation. This test also should be used to reassess self-preservation capability when a resident's functional status changes.

Resident's Name: _____

Residence Address: _____

Testing Date: ____ / ____ / ____ Person Conducting Test: _____

Part I: Verbal Test Questions

1. Name some ways you can tell when there's a fire?

(To answer this question satisfactorily, three of the following six indicators must be mentioned. If not enough accurate answers are given, the tester should ask? "WHAT ELSE?")

	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Seeing smoke	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smelling smoke	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seeing flames	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeling heat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hearing alarm bell	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hearing someone yell "FIRE"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other responses given by client:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. What would you do if the building you were in was on fire?

(To answer this question satisfactorily, the answer should include leaving or getting out of the building.)

Part II: Functional Evacuation Testing

(This is conducted if you have uncertainty regarding the individual's ability to evacuate.)

Testing is conducted at placement location after emergency evacuation procedures have been reviewed. Bring recipient to his/her proposed sleeping quarters. Explain that you will be testing his/her ability to leave the building in case of fire. Explain that the test is necessary for all persons. Sound the fire alarm/smoke detector to initiate tests, if possible. Timing of test begins with alarm going off and ends when recipient arrives at meeting area.

1. From sleeping quarters, with doors closed, have the recipient exit the building through the primary means of egress to ground level and out to the designated meeting area. Record the following data.

Total time to exit building: _____

Type of assistance required, if any: _____

2. From sleeping quarters, with doors closed, have the recipient exit the building through the second means of egress to ground level and out to the designated meeting area.

Total time to exit building: _____

Type of assistance required, if any: _____

Sample: Capability of Self Preservation Determination
(continued)

Recipient Name: _____

Part III: Determination

	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Additional Training Required
Has adequate knowledge of fire signs and signals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has adequate knowledge of procedures during a fire?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Able to exit the building in 3 minutes from the main route of exit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Able to exit the building in 3 minutes from the secondary route of exit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Self-preservation Status:

- Capable of independent self-preservation (unimpaired)
- Capable of self-preservation with verbal instruction (partially impaired)
- Capable of self-preservation with physical instruction (impaired)
- Not capable of self-preservation at this time.

Does the client have any known hearing, visual, mobility or psychological impairments that may affect his/her ability to self-preserve? Yes No

If yes, describe:

Adaptive equipment needed, if any: _____

Comments:

Signature of Tester

Title

Signature of Supervisor

Title

Date

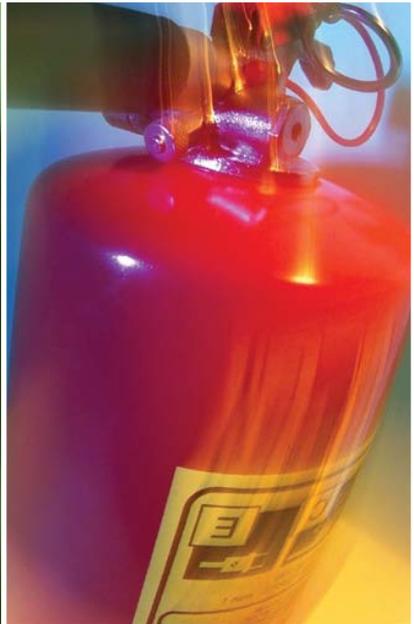
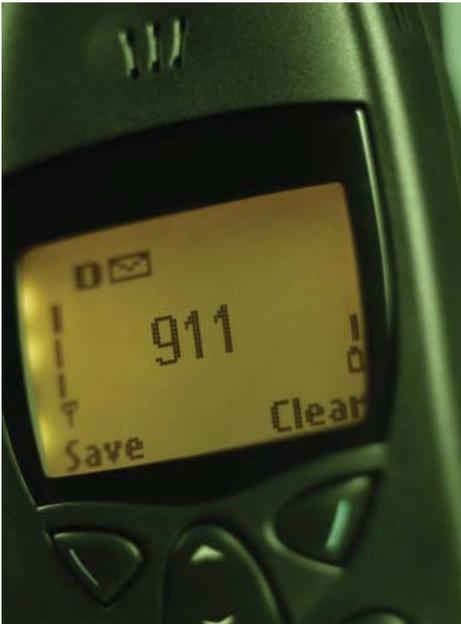
Sample Self-preservation Test- 4/2011

**A complete copy of the Self-Preservation Test is located at:
www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/firesafety/**



**Additional copies of this brochure are located at:
www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/firesafety/**





Developed by the NYS Office of Mental Health
Available online at www.omh.ny.gov