

Emergency Drill Checklist

Crises often occur unexpectedly. Conducting a well-prepared emergency drill enables your organization to evaluate personnel, protocols, and communication channels prior to an actual event.

This checklist is designed to assist you in organizing and executing successful drills, uncovering potential vulnerabilities, and enhancing organizational preparedness.

Why Emergency Drills Matter

1. Build Confidence Through Practice

Emergency plans are only effective when people know how to put them into action.

Regular drills help employees practice evacuation procedures, emergency communications, accountability protocols, and responsibilities in a safe environment. Familiarity can reduce confusion and help people take the right actions when every second counts.

2. Find Gaps Before They Become Problems

Drills can uncover weaknesses that may not be obvious on paper. Testing your emergency response plan can reveal issues with alarms, notification systems, evacuation routes, contact information, accessibility, technology, or assigned responsibilities. Identifying these gaps during a drill gives your organization an opportunity to address them before a real emergency.

3. Continuously Improve Readiness

Every drill should produce actionable insights. By measuring performance and gathering feedback, your organization can determine what worked, what caused delays or confusion, and what should be improved before the next exercise.

Before The Drill

Plan for Success

Define Clear Objectives

Determine exactly what the drill is designed to test.

Consider objectives such as:

- Evacuation procedures and response times
- Emergency notification delivery
- Notification procedures and deliverability
- Employee response to instructions
- Employee and visitor accountability
- Emergency team coordination
- Accessibility procedures
- Escalation and decision-making processes
- Business continuity procedures

Establishing measurable objectives makes the drill easier to evaluate.

Conduct an Orientation

Make sure employees understand your organization's emergency procedures and know what is expected of them. Review evacuation routes, assembly locations, emergency contacts, accountability procedures, and other relevant protocols.

Assign Roles and Responsibilities

Clearly identify who is responsible for:

- Initiating emergency notifications
- Managing the incident
- Directing evacuation or shelter-in-place procedures
- Accounting for employees and visitors
- Coordinating with emergency responders
- Observing and documenting the exercise

Designate backups for critical roles whenever possible.

Review Your Emergency Communication Plan

Confirm that notification groups, contact information, message templates, and communication channels are ready for testing. Determine:

- Who needs to receive alerts
- Who is authorized to send them
- Which channels will be tested
- What information recipients need
- How responses or acknowledgments will be tracked

Coordinate With Public Safety Partners

When appropriate, involve local fire, police, emergency medical services, emergency management, or other public safety agencies.

Their participation can add realism to the exercise and provide valuable feedback.

Be sure to consider applicable regulations and industry-specific requirements when planning drills.

During The Drill

Test the Plan Under Realistic Conditions

Activate Emergency Notifications

Test whether your organization can quickly reach the right people with clear, actionable information. Depending on your emergency communication capabilities, test multiple channels such as:

- SMS/text messages
- Voice calls
- Email
- Mobile app notifications
- Desktop alerts
- Public-address systems
- Digital signage
- Audible and visual alarms

Evaluate not only whether alerts were delivered, but whether recipients understood what action to take.

Test Employee and Visitor Accountability

Determine whether you can quickly account for employees, contractors, visitors, and other stakeholders. *Identify whether your procedures can answer three critical questions:*

Who is safe?
Who needs assistance?
Who remains unaccounted for?

Evaluate Evacuation or Protective Actions

Observe whether participants correctly follow procedures for evacuation, shelter-in-place, lockdown, or other protective actions included in the scenario. Pay attention to bottlenecks, inaccessible routes, confusion, and delays.

Introduce Realistic Challenges

Real emergencies rarely happen under ideal conditions. Consider testing scenarios involving:

- A blocked exit or inaccessible stairway
- An employee requiring assistance
- A power or network outage
- A missing response-team member
- Visitors unfamiliar with the facility
- Remote or hybrid employees
- Multiple affected locations
- Failure of a primary communication channel

These variables can expose vulnerabilities that routine drills may miss.

Observe and Document

Assign observers to record what happens throughout the exercise. Capture:

Response times
Notification performance
Participant actions
Communication gaps
Equipment or technology issues
Accountability challenges
Deviations from procedures
Unexpected problems

After The Drill

Turn Observations Into Improvements

Conduct a Post-Drill Debrief

Meet with participants, observers, and response leaders as soon as possible after the exercise.

Ask:

What worked well?
Where did we experience delays or confusion?
What should we change before the next drill?
Encourage specific, constructive feedback.

Review Communication Performance

*Evaluate how effectively emergency information reached your audience.
Consider:*

- Were alerts delivered quickly?
- Did messages reach the intended recipients?
- Were instructions clear and actionable?
- Did all communication channels perform as expected?
- Were acknowledgments or responses captured when needed?
- Were there gaps in employee contact information?

Create an After-Action Report

Document the results of the exercise, including:

- Drill objectives
- Timeline and response times
- Successful procedures
- Identified gaps
- Communication performance
- Technology issues
- Participant feedback
- Recommended improvements

Assign Corrective Actions

*Turn each significant finding into an action item.
For every corrective action, identify:*

Owner: **Who is responsible?**
Priority: **How important is it?**
Deadline: **When should it be resolved?**
Verification: **How will completion be confirmed?**

Update Your Emergency Plan

Incorporate lessons learned into emergency procedures, training materials, communication templates, contact databases, and response protocols.

Schedule the Next Exercise

Preparedness is an ongoing process—not a one-time event.
Use lessons from each drill to make the next exercise more realistic and effective.

PLAN → PRACTICE → EVALUATE → IMPROVE → REPEAT

QUICK DRILL SCORECARD

After the exercise, rate each area:

Area	Effective	Needs Improvement	Action Required
Emergency notifications	☐	☐	☐
Message clarity	☐	☐	☐
Employee response	☐	☐	☐
Evacuation/protective actions	☐	☐	☐
Employee accountability	☐	☐	☐
Visitor accountability	☐	☐	☐
Accessibility procedures	☐	☐	☐
Response-team coordination	☐	☐	☐
Technology and equipment	☐	☐	☐
Overall readiness	☐	☐	☐

Stronger Preparedness Starts With Better Communication

A crisis demands more than just an initial alert. To ensure safety, organizations must rapidly contact the correct individuals, deliver explicit guidance, and maintain a continuous flow of information as situations evolve. This is where regular emergency drills become vital — offering a safe environment to evaluate your communication infrastructure before an actual crisis occurs.

Evaluating Your Strategy Ahead of the Next Drill

Regroup supports your safety goals by reinforcing emergency readiness through dependable, multi-channel mass notification and critical communication tools.

Leverage your upcoming drill to measure not just the physical response, but how efficiently you connect with and protect those who rely on you. Build assurance through preparation, and ensure you can communicate effectively when it counts the most.