Fire Drills
Done Right
“What” is a fire drill?

• A planned event.
• An unannounced event.
• Held at various hours.

• Simulates emergency conditions.
• Is evaluated and documented.
“Why” do a fire drill?

• Required under WAC 212-12-044.
• Required under the 2009 International Fire Code.
• Enhances the safety of residents, employees, and other occupants.
• Evaluate the response readiness of staff.
• Identify response complications of occupants.
• Ensure the proper functioning of fire protection systems.
• Proactive risk management.
"Who" is responsible for conducting fire drills?

- Facilities licensed by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services:
  - Skilled Nursing facilities
  - Boarding Homes
  - Group Care Facilities
  - Residential Treatment Facilities
- Facilities licensed by the Washington State Department of Health:
  - Hospitals
  - Ambulatory Surgical Centers
  - Birthing Centers
- Facilities licensed by the Washington State Department of Early Learning
  - Child Care Centers/Providers
- Other facilities as identified in the 2009 International Fire Code
“When” are we required to conduct a fire drill?

• For Group “I”, Group “E”, and Group “R2” occupancies a minimum of 12 planned unannounced fire drills shall be held every year.

• Drills shall be held quarterly for each shift in Group “I” and Group “R2” occupancies.
  – “Each Shift” means conducting drills during the actual hours of the day that encompass the Day, Swing, or Night/NOC shift.
  – This also results in a minimum of 12 drills annually.

• Drills shall be held monthly in Group “E” and Group “I4” occupancies.
Consider the R.A.C.E. acronym.

- R – Rescue / Remove the residents/occupants from area of danger.
- A – Activate the alarm system.
- C – Confine/Contain the fire to the room/area of origin.
- E – Extinguish or Evacuate.
“HOW” to conduct a fire drill.
1. Determine who will be responsible for the drill.

• The staff person should be familiar with the facility and the fire protection systems.
• The person’s primary responsibility is the execution and evaluation of the drill.
• The person will serve as primary record keeper of the drill.
2. Familiarize yourself with your emergency procedures manual.

- Ensure that your procedures are current and align with local fire department preferences.
- Ensure that procedures incorporate your fire protection systems.
3. Provide ‘In-Service’ training for your employees.

- Discuss what each person’s individual role will be.
- If possible, provide ‘hands-on’ tools to familiarize staff with systems.
- Present multiple “What if...” scenarios.
- Consider written tests to ensure retention.
4. Select a date and time for the drill.

- Do not pre-announce the drill.
- Prepare yourself to take notes of your observations.
- Select an inconspicuous location to observe staff response to the drill.
5. Contact the monitoring station.

• Advise that you are preparing to conduct a fire drill, and need to have the signal temporarily placed in “Fire Drill Only” mode.

• Agree to a pre-determined time period when regular service will automatically be restored.

• Verify system restoration after the drill is complete.
6. Plan your fire drill scenario.

- Consider using something that represents ‘fire’ such as a flashing beacon, traffic cone, etc.
- Place it in a high traffic location where staff is likely to encounter it.
- Observe for staff responding properly upon discovery.
- Look for staff trying to evade the scenario.
7. Activate the alarm system.

- Simply activate the alarm by:
  - Introducing ‘canned smoke’ at a smoke detector.
  - Using a manual pull station/box anywhere on the system.
  - Using the test mode at the fire alarm control panel.
8. Observe system response.

- Is the fire alarm in “General Alarm” mode?
- Are strobes and horns functioning properly?
- Are fire doors releasing from magnetic hold-opens?
9. Observe staff response.

- Do staff members respond properly to the alarm?
- Are staff members clear as to their response role and move with purpose?
- Do staff members simply ignore the alarm?
- Do staff members purposely evade the alarm?
10. Observe occupant response.

- Are residents/occupants apathetic?
- Are residents/occupants anxious or fearful?
- Do resident/occupant disabilities diminish their ability to respond?
  - Ambulation?
  - Hearing concerns?
  - Vision concerns?
  - Medicated elderly residents?
  - Oxygen dependent?
- Does age affect the ability for self-preservation?
11. Record your observations.

- Identify where repairs are needed (doors, alarm devices, etc.) and generate work orders.
- Identify staff response issues:
  - Knowledge
  - Tools
  - Promptness
  - Readiness
12. Have employees record their participation.
13. Review and improve the process for future drills.

• Score and evaluate staff performance.
• Identify shortcomings in the existing emergency plan.
• Modify the plans as needed.
• Maintain detailed records.
• Survey staff to identify additional areas of improvement.
• Develop future ‘In Service’ training for staff.
Follow Up Actions

• Meet with your local fire officials to review and update your emergency plans to best suit their response plan.

• Share your successes with other facilities in your company.