



*Simplified Self-Management*

## **HOW-TO....** **3B. DEVELOP EMERGENCY** **PROTOCOLS**

*(partial sample)*

In this packet, you will find the following topics that are specific to this How-To process:

- A. Introduction**
- B. AAI Forms List**
- C. Step-By-Step Instructions**
- D. Next Steps**
- E. Resources**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

More than any other aspect of managing an association, the occasional serious emergency can be the one event that may cause the most damage to the property and financial devastation to the budget. Without a policy in place, and a protocol that all board members and owners are aware of, it may be impossible to recover from such devastation and many unprepared associations have suffered for years afterward.

To prevent this from happening to your property, an emergency protocol must be established in advance, utilizing the resources of a well-planned operations procedure and it must be communicated completely so that all parties know how to react at the proper time. The AAI step-by-step process of creating an Emergency Protocol for your Association will help the Board protect the property, save the Board and owners from the affects of crisis management, which is the end result of poor planning. The final reward: minimized damages and sound financial management.

By following the steps in this How-To by AAI, you will develop the necessary protocols to ensure the best possible safe and efficient means to protect your property under most emergency circumstances:

- 1) Obtain Owner Emergency Information
- 2) Consider Possible Emergencies Applicable To Your Association
- 3) Determine All Emergency Shut-Offs and Document Them
- 4) Troubleshooting Options For The Self-Managed Association
- 5) Emergency Protocols For Board/Manager
- 6) Emergency Instructions To Owners
- 7) After The Emergency

## **B. AAI FORMS LIST:**

Please review the List of Forms and Usage. Every Association is different; therefore, you should customize these forms to meet your Association's specific needs. Please note that there may be information in the Header & Footer sections that require your customization or deletion prior to distribution.

**Summary of Forms Needed for this How-To are: FORMS 3.OperMan\_F9-10**

**And, from Category 2-Management Transitions: FORMS 2.MgmtTrans\_F2-3**

## **C. STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS**

**Refer to your Summary Sheet from the Training Session and/or read any applicable sections in your Association's Declaration/By-Laws before getting started.**

**1) Obtain Owner Emergency Information:** As a first order of business, the Board needs to consider all the many issues that can go wrong at any given moment. With the dynamics of personalities in the building, mishaps can happen behind closed doors. Owners may not be home when that pipe bursts, or toilet leaks, or gas escapes from the stove. Carelessness can contribute to the endangerment of not only property, but people as well. Access to units is crucial, time is of the essence and moments lost can mean damage to property, both personal and common elements.

The first crucial step is to have quick access to owners and, in their absence, an emergency contact person that can get to the building and enter the unit quickly. The use of the *Owner/Resident Form* and *Owner/Resident Roster* (*see Category 2-Management Transitions*) will assist the Board in filling in the emergency contact person for each unit. As previously mentioned, this should be updated each year and included in the *Operations Manual*. In addition, if there is an Association Website, this information should be uploaded for Board access to create transparency and efficiency.

2	2.MgmtTrans_F2.doc	<i>Owner/Resident Form</i>
3	2.MgmtTrans_F3.doc	<i>Owner/Resident Roster</i>

Owners should be advised to leave a key with someone who will have easy access to the property. A sister in a different state will not help if there is smoke coming from under the door. Owners can pick each other, leaving a key with perhaps one or two neighbors in the building. Whatever their choice, it should be a handy person nearby, with access to the property and the key in their possession. If no one is home when an emergency is evident, the Board needs to use this emergency contact person quickly with an acceptable response time.

Obviously, if there is fire, smoke or eminent danger, 911 should be called immediately. The door will be broken down by the fire department, and let the insurance figure out the responsible party. But, ideally, most emergencies can be handled by someone with a key who can get there within a reasonable amount of time for unit entry.

*Note: Some Declarations require that the Board obtain keys to each unit. In other cases, Boards make it mandatory. If this is the preferred style of your Association, please use caution when storing the keys to*

the units. They should be retained in a locked cabinet that only Board and/or building personnel have access to, under board direction and for emergency purposes only. Request that owners sign a waiver that they have left their key with the Board for emergency purposes, and understand it is at their own risk. We do not recommend that Boards have access to individual unit owner keys because: 1) If something is missing from a unit, the owner could accuse the Board of entering their unit without permission and may add to Board liability; and, 2) Owners may consider this a “lock-out” service and contact the Board in the middle of the night for unit access, which is neither convenient nor the role of the Board. If there is language in your Declaration requiring that the Board obtain keys, we recommend that the next time you amend your Declaration, you speak to your attorney about deleting this from your Declaration.

**2) Consider Possible Emergencies Applicable To Your Association:** Based on your specific property, consider all common areas and types of emergencies that could possibly happen and the types of action the Board would want to take including, but not limited to, an electronic gate enclosing the parking area that might not open, a garage door that could break trapping cars and people inside or out, an exterior door that malfunctions, prohibiting egress, etc.

For example, it's 3:00 a.m., an owner is coming home from a party and, as she walks down the hall, she steps into a puddle of water. She looks up, and water is pouring out of the ceiling above her head. It's not raining out and, besides, this is only the 2nd floor in a 5-story building! What does she do?

If you are on the Board, the last thing you want her to do is wake you up but, in a self-managed building that may be the requirement. In any event, there must be a protocol with accurate directions so that the unit owner knows exactly who to call and how to act. No matter what the process is, **unless professionally managed**, in most cases, the Board and not the owners should be the one activating the emergency system. Directions to an owner, if self managed, may be to contact a board member immediately. This can be any one of them, a different one each week or one specific person they are instructed to call. Once the board has the emergency information, here are options that can be considered as your next step:

**A) If professionally managed**, your management company will have an emergency number for the owner to call. That emergency number may be an answering service with specific instructions on how to get the proper person to return the call. Generally, there will be a list of emergency contact personnel in the event of a lack of response. Your property manager, or manager who is on-call that night, will be responsible to: 1) Return the owner's call; 2) Assess the situation to see if it can wait until normal business hours or must be addressed immediately; 3) Contact the appropriate vendor and respond to the emergency; and, 4) Provide an update on what transpired so the appropriate property manager (if applicable) will be informed and can follow up from there. Or it may be an answering machine, designed to automatically dial a connecting party to respond.

**B) If self-managed**, the Board will need to determine—in advance—what the emergency protocols are for the building and will need to communicate that to all owners and applicable vendors.

**3) Determine All Emergency Shut-Offs and Document Them:** Whether you obtain this information from the original developer, current property manager, utility company or have to hire an outside troubleshooting or maintenance company to help you find all that may be applicable to your property, it is important to know where all emergency shut-offs are located. The location should be documented, and this information should be in your *Operations Manual*.

Be sure to do this BEFORE a problem exists as this can be detrimental to preventing or lessening damage to the property and danger to people. You may also consider posting these in a common area near or within the main utility rooms in the event that a unit owner has a contractor doing work in their unit and something goes wrong requiring immediate action on their part.

**A) Sample Checklist For Emergency Protocols:**

*(Enclosed is a partial sample. There are a total of 7 pages for this How-To. Sign-Up for Simplified Self-Management today to begin creating efficient Emergency Protocols for your Association!)*

SAMPLE