

WHITE PAPER

Shelter-In-Place

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Shelter-In-Place

Introduction

On September 11th, 2001, an evacuation took place at Tower 1 at the World Trade Tower Complex after the tower was hit by a terrorist-driven plane. People at WTC 5, World Trade Tower 2 and at 130 Liberty began to evacuate as well – before Tower 2 was hit. Although the evacuation was known to have been orderly at both Towers, there appeared to have been some confusion regarding communications by building management to the inhabitants of Tower 2 as they were in the process of evacuating. In order to possibly avoid additional congestion in the streets below, the inhabitants were informed by Tower 2 Building Management that it was safe to return to their desks. Many people followed this directive and stopped their participation in the evacuation process. There was either no information or the same kind of directive given to those at Tower 5 as well.

The result of this kind of directive has resulted in an almost knee-jerk reaction by business tenants of office buildings in New York City to evacuate at any hint of concern – especially those in the Financial sector. After 9/11, people became very nervous about handing the decision regarding their safety and their lives to anyone, let alone facilities or building management for three basic reasons: 1) They remember what happened to Colleagues and loved-ones who turned around and went back to their desks on 9/11; 2) No-one can predict the full extent of any attack – It has been observed that some Terrorist groups tend to perform simultaneous attacks – sometimes at some distance from each other; and 3) People want to get out of the building, out of the City, go home and assess later—essentially people are shell-shocked. Many of us are still trying to process what happened on September 11th, 2001.

As we transitioned from 2002 to 2003, there seemed to be more focus on chemical, biological and radiological methods of instilling terror on American soil. Dirty Bombs, weapons of mass destruction, sarin and anthrax were in the news at a regular clip. I found myself reviewing the evacuation processes that I had created and began to wonder if indeed, we were possibly endangering building inhabitants by permitting them to respond to their fears and evacuate without considering what might be happening outside - in the street. It was clear that a re-education program was required to raise awareness of the importance of the Shelter-In-Place Disaster Recovery scenario.

How do you even suggest to people that they not follow what they feel are their instincts? How do you suggest that people not evacuate their building especially in a place like Manhattan, when one cannot always determine where the source of the problem is. Although most people think that being in a high-rise office building permits uninterrupted views, it can actually be somewhat blinding as one really only has the view based on the location of

their office. In multi-tenant buildings, it could be almost impossible to know what is occurring at the other three sides of the floor, let alone within the building. There is no visual perspective.

The Shelter-In-Place process is a tough one to deal with – to plan, to practice, to implement. There are many difficult aspects:

- Knowing what the root cause of the event is and the time it takes for City/State and Federal Agencies to determine its validity;
- Notification to the Building Managers by City/State and Federal Agencies;
- The true time it may take to keep tenants in the building until the building manager is notified by City/State/Federal Agencies and fulfillment of the complete process of Shelter-In-Place
- Dealing with those Tenants who choose to leave at any time during the process;
- Dealing with those Tenants who interpret the process as impeding their rights to make decisions about their own safety, their own life;
- Keeping the emotional well-balance of those participating in the process;

In summary, how do we set direction when there is little or no information and no guarantees on how long it could take before direction is set by Federal Authorities and that the process is really in place to help them, not hinder their rights.

The Foundations of Educating Tenants to Shelter-in-Place

The Goal

The Goal of the Shelter-In-Place educational program is to teach Tenants to trust the process by extending an invitation to Tenants to maintain a stake in the process.

How is this done? By defining a schedule of regular and consistent communications, strong process and related procedures and practice drills that teach Tenants to trust you while learning to be responsible for their safety and the safety of others by taking the time to consider their actions before they take them. As well, to establish a partnership with Tenants by taking the time to understand their Business and disaster experience so that in case Shelter-In-Place is warranted, there is a sense of cooperation and support.

Step 1: Know your Building Management. Know Your Tenants' Business.

Is the building a multi-or single-occupancy building?

Is the building in a major part of the City, near tourist areas of interest?

Is the building in a business district? What kind of business?

What guidelines are suggested / offered by the Building Management?
How old is the building structure? How well fortified is the core?
How many floors in the building?
How often are evacuation drills performed?
Is the business related to the financial industry?
Was the company formerly in or near the World Trade Center complex on 9/11? Were current inhabitants evacuees on 9/11?
What kind of experience did building inhabitants have on 8/14/03 – as a result of the Blackout?

Step 2: Identify Outside Help.

If the Tenants experienced a traumatic event in their lives, it may be worthwhile working with Human Resources to schedule a professional to provide workshops or counseling for post traumatic stress.

Step 3: Create the Educational Program and Tools.

If there is not only already, setup a Business Continuity Program or Corporate Securities Program.

Ask the Tenants to identify volunteers who can help to represent the safety processes and procedures to their Colleagues. One volunteer for each business or 10% of the total business is adequate. Schedule monthly meetings to communicate with the Business volunteers.

Create a monthly communications program with all of the Tenants to keep them informed and aware of the safety processes and procedures that are in-place.

Provide a website where Tenants may review information to help them to focus on times when the business is not too stressful for them.

Set an annual schedule of events: fire drills, evacuation drills, shelter-in-place drills, staff accountability drills; call tree drills; presentations by the Fire Department, Police Department, etc.

The most important thing you can do to gain the trust of Tenants is to communicate clearly and regularly and to avoid arrogance by establishing a Partnership with Tenants.

Step 4: The Educational Foundations of the Shelter-In-Place Program.

We are responsible for our own safety and for the safety of others.

We need to begin to teach Corporate tenants to think before they act and to understand that the moment they wake up, they touch the lives of others. A terrorist attack evokes many different responses that we may not be ready for – in each other or in our Colleagues and friends. Being responsible for our own safety may mean to learn to stop and think long enough to separate their emotions from the realities of the situation. By setting this kind of example, they may help others to respond accordingly rather than reacting without consideration of what may wait beyond the safety of the building.

Learn to Trust the Fire Department, the First Responders.

This is a very difficult problem with Corporate Tenants. Almost every person I have worked with has claimed that they plan to leave the building immediately should there be an event. It is extremely difficult to ask them to wait for directions from the building management via the public address system or to trust the Fire Department.

Learn to Trust the process and its source: Corporate Security and Building Management.

Teach the process in detail and provide the Tenants an opportunity to be part of the process by practicing the process and by providing feedback.

As in item 2, above, Tenants are only too aware that it may take time for Federal/ State and City Agencies to check the area after an event for bio-chemical, other poisonous agents that may be in the air or resolve civil unrest. Communicating with Tenants on a regular basis about the Safety program and your concerns as well may help to develop a sense of trust in your judgment and even a sense of partnership.

Ask them to consider that their immediate building may not be physically impacted.

In some cases the trigger of the event may not directly impact the immediate building but may have taken place on the same street upon which the building exists, within the vicinity or in another part of the city – the concern being that another impact may soon follow and it is safer to be sheltered than on the street. It may be difficult for Tenants to understand that their immediate building is not impacted because they felt it shake, they smell smoke or the unfolding events may be visible from their windows and this may be enough to frighten them into a reaction.

It may be safer to be inside than outside.

The logic that is presented to staff as part of the re-education is: 1) Police may lock-down the city for a period of time after an event, stopping commuter transportation and venues through and out of the city. Why not stay inside where you are safe and can be comfortable? 2) There may be too many people in the streets as a direct result of the impact and the congestion could be a cause of additional. 3) Any chemical or bio-chemical substance would dissipate within .5/hour; 4) It is unclear whether another impact, closer to the area may occur.

How does the process work? Who will communicate with them?

Ensure regular notifications, articles, communications and practice drills so that Tenants become comfortable with the process. Work with Business heads to ensure that they have Business Continuity Plans, Call Trees in place and that they practice them regularly.

It may be safer for them to move to a safer place within the building.

It may be suggested to staff that they transition from their seats to the core of the building, away from the windows. For those floors that are open and without a clearly defined core infrastructure, such as a trading floor, the Shelter-In-Place scenario may result in additional activities such as an internal evacuation to lower floors (below ground) that permit staff some place of safety.

Duration of the Shelter-In-Place Response.

Explain that a Shelter-In-Place scenario is usually maintained for as long as it takes for the EPA to determine whether it is safe to be outside or until it is clear that any civil unrest has subsided. I have seen this interrupted from as short a Shelter-In-Place program of .5/hr to the "as long as it takes" approach that can last for days.

In order to safeguard your safety, we may need to lockdown the building.

Explain that because of the uncertainty of the situation as well as possible crowding in the streets, the Company and/or Building Management may lock-down the building, making it difficult for those on the street, including Company employees, who happened to be outside, from accessing the building.