Policy Statement

Although it is the policy of the University of Colorado Denver that all persons shall be allowed to evacuate the building when a fire alarm sounds, there are certain circumstances which may necessitate remaining in-place for delayed evacuation. Such conditions that may preclude immediate evacuation are surgical procedures that are beyond a point of cessation, time-critical research operations, and medical boards testing that would be jeopardized by loss of continuity.

Delayed evacuation would only be considered acceptable if there were NO indications of a fire or other emergency.

While actual fires on the campus are rare, fires have the inherent hazards of heat, smoke, and toxic gases. In addition, fires can quickly spread, limiting visibility and making escape difficult. Alarm systems are designed to provide early warning, which may be critical in an emergency.

Applicable Campus:

All UC Denver Campuses

Purpose

To establish a policy for safe pre-planned delayed evacuation during fire alarms on campus property.

Scope

The policy covers all campus departments and staff.

Procedures

It is the policy of the University of Colorado Denver that all persons shall be allowed to evacuate the building during fire alarms, unless a specific program has applied for a "limited defend-in-place status."

In order to provide for a reasonable level of safety, and at the same time prevent unnecessary loss of valuable resources, guidelines have been established that will be considered mandatory on the campus. Procedures that allow for remaining in-place should be considered "delayed evaucations" as opposed to "non-evacuations", and strict oversight and accountability must be pre-arranged. Each department that anticipates the potential for a delayed evacuation must have a written procedure addressing the following concerns:

- A designated person (usually referred to as a "fire warden") must be at the location of concern during the time period when delayed evacuation is anticipated (referred to as the watch period).
- The fire warden must be trained to look for the indicators of fire or other hazardous conditions, and must immediately, upon an alarm, check the local areas adjacent to where the delayed evacuation is designated.

- Should the fire command center or the local fire responders announce that evacuation is required, the fire warden will immediately direct persons to evacuate the area. (Notification from the fire command center or fire department may be given over the public address system or in-person.)

- The fire warden must have direct knowledge of main and alternate routes of egress from the area.

- The fire warden must have the absolute authority to immediately call for the evacuation of all persons within the area, should indicators of fire be noted.

- Prior to the watch period, personnel affected by the possibility of delayed evacuation must be informed of these procedures, to include probable egress routes.

- If an “all-clear” is announced over the public address system, the fire warden must inform the persons within the delayed evacuation area.

Although most alarms on the campus are determined to be non-fire events, the possibility of an actual fire is real, and adequate preparation must be made to safely evacuate personnel should an actual fire occur. Smoke and particulates from microwave ovens and other sources are referred to as “nuisance alarms”, not false alarms, because the detection system is functioning properly when these other sources initiate an alarm. Fire alarms and light-strobes shall not be disabled or altered in any manner.

We ask administrators requesting delayed evacuation under these guidelines to seriously consider the implications involved in allowing personnel to delay evacuation. A request for permission to delay evacuation will only be considered if the circumstances truly warrant it. For questions pertaining to this document, or for consultation and assistance, please contact the campus Fire and Life Safety Officer, at 303-724-0293.

Prepared by:

Wayne Blubaugh, MPA
Fire and Life Safety Officer, Facilities Operations

Approved by:

David C. Turnquist, PE
Assistant Vice Chancellor, Facilities Operations

References:
- 2006 ed. International Fire Code
- Campus Authority having Jurisdiction Policy