

Emergency Planning for Aged Care – The Basics

So many things to consider, let's start with "How to find my way out..?"

The only question that needs to be answered from a fire safety perspective is:

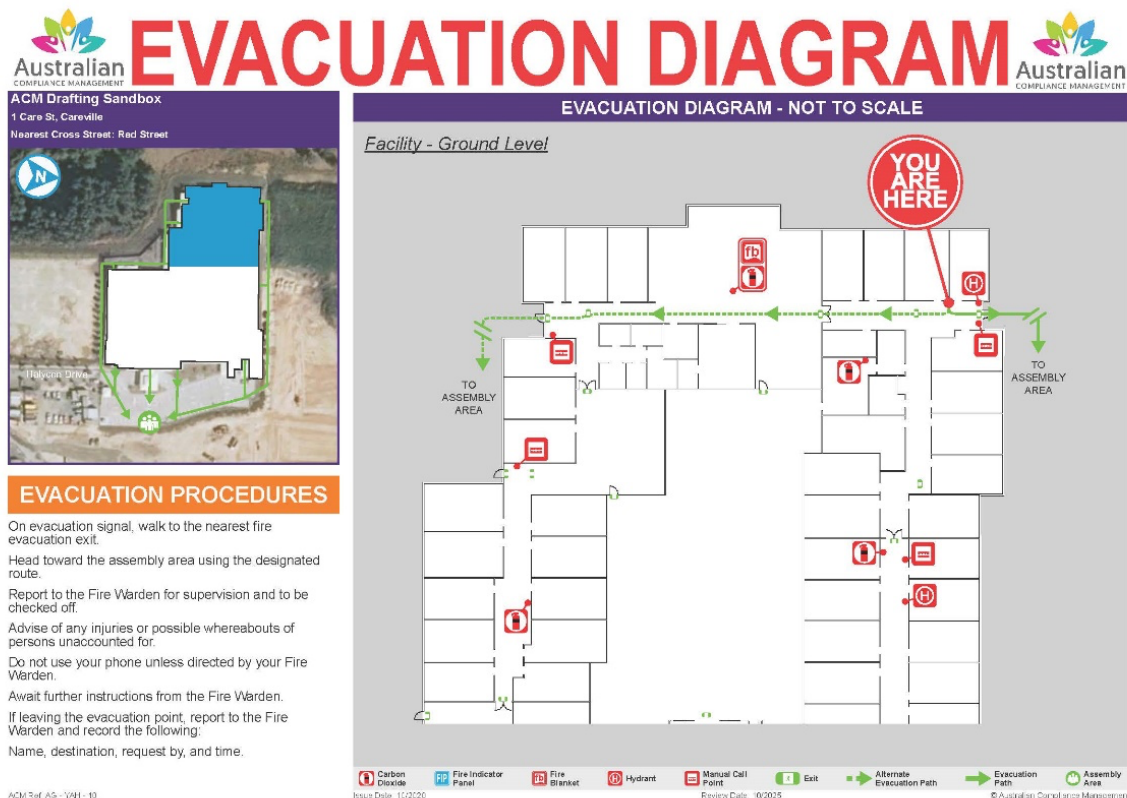
"Could your team and residents find safety in just a few minutes?"

Yes, a few minutes - potentially that's how long you have to ensure the safety of everyone in your facility in the event of a fire.

The biggest tool in your emergency planning toolbox is a well-crafted emergency evacuation diagram. First and foremost, your emergency evacuation diagrams need to be properly oriented to where they are placed in your facility i.e. when you stand in front of a diagram, the **"You Are Here"** needs to reflect exactly where you are standing in the building.

Three steps to creating an easy to read Emergency Evacuation Diagram for your aged care facility:

- **Step One - Keep it Simple**
- **Step Two - Keep it Concise**
- **Step Three - Only Show what Occupants Need to Know.**



Step One: ***Keep it Simple***

A challenge creating emergency documentation in Aged Care is creating something which can be understood by people whose cognitive skills may be declining. The resident who was once an electrical engineer may now struggle to comprehend detailed documents.

When creating an emergency evacuation diagram just remember to keep it simple.

Step Two: ***Keep it Concise***

The “**You Are Here**” notification on your diagram must accurately reflect where you are in the building. Once you have that right, everything should flow easily and clearly. Your diagram’s symbols need to be easily understood, without too much language or description getting in the way.

Step Three: ***Only Show what Occupants Need to Know***

The crucial information required on your diagram includes:

- Accurate “**You Are Here**”
- **Green dotted line with arrows** showing nearest exit
- Green dotted line showing **secondary safe exit** in case the nearest exit becomes blocked or unsafe
- Symbols identifying **all firefighting equipment**
- Clearly marked **Assembly Areas**.

When it comes to keeping your residents and staff safe it all comes back to compliance. If your facility had a fire safety inspection tomorrow, would your evacuation diagrams pass the grade?

A final test you can use to understand whether your evacuation diagrams work well is to:

- ❖ Ask your cognitive residents to stand in front of one of your diagrams and point to where they are in the building
- ❖ Get them to track from where they are to the nearest exit leading to an Assembly Area.
- ❖ Ask staff to do the same thing, and to identify where alternative exits are located and where the nearest fire extinguishers are.



If residents and staff can easily undertake those tasks, that's great!! If not, then it's time to move to evacuation diagrams that are simple and easy to read.

The documents that guide your compliance for Fire Safety and Emergency Management are:

- [Australian Standard AS 3745-2010 Planning for emergencies in facilities](#), and
- [AS 4083-2010 Planning for emergencies - Health care facilities](#).

This article was prepared by **Australian Compliance Management (ACM)**

ACM has chosen to partner with PlanSafe to help residential aged care and in-home care businesses become and remain compliant with all aspects of Building and Workplace Fire Safety.

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