



THE UNITED GRAND CHAPTER OF AUSTRALIA

Order of the Eastern Star

HAVING JURISDICTION WITHIN THE STATES AND TERRITORIES OF AUSTRALIA AND ITS DEPENDENCIES

Emergency Procedures & Guide

Under the *Work Health & Safety Act 2011* and guidance provided by *Safe Work Australia*, all volunteer organisations such as Chapters of the Order of the Eastern Star, have a duty of care to ensure the safety and welfare of those that attend their meetings. To assist Chapters to achieve this, The United Grand Chapter of Australia recommends that all Chapters develop and implement an Emergency Plan. This plan encompasses three main activities and these are explained in more detail below:

1. Annual Safety and Security Review

A checklist has been made available that identifies the specific areas that Chapters need to look at to ensure the safety and security of members. It covers elements such as the inspection of fire extinguishers/blankets; fire exits; electrical wiring; the condition of doors; windows; general hazards that could exist; and the presence of adequate lighting to assist the security of members in car parks; etc. The checklist also reminds Chapters to ensure members know how to use the safety equipment available and where it is located.

This checklist can be downloaded from the member's area of the UGCA website at www.oesaustralia.org.au. If you need assistance obtaining a copy, please contact the Worthy Grand Secretary.

2. Evacuation Plan

Each Chapter should have a plan that details what would happen if members and visitors need to evacuate the premises during a meeting. The plan identifies the processes to be followed and it contains the following elements:

- ★ At least 2 (two) members need to be assigned (Emergency Wardens) as having the responsibility of assessing an emergency situation and reporting back to the Presiding Officer with the recommended action to be taken. If an evacuation is required, these members will need to be fully aware of the safest route to take, where all members need to evacuate to (a marshalling area), and to co-ordinate the movement of members out of the premises.
- ★ If an evacuation is necessary during a meeting, all members (as directed by the Emergency Wardens), should leave immediately regardless of whether the Chapter Bible is still open or not. The safety of members and visitors is paramount, and any meeting process or ritual in progress at that time, is to be abandoned.
- ★ If there are members in attendance that have a disability, or they have difficulty in moving in a steady but urgent manner, another member should try to assist them to evacuate if it is safe to do so. Similarly, there may be visitors in attendance who are not familiar with the premises, or have disabilities, and they should also be assisted.
- ★ The Attendance Book will be used to check that all members and visitors have been evacuated to safety. Chapters need to make sure that these remain accessible throughout the meeting so they can be quickly taken and used by the Emergency Wardens at the marshalling area.
- ★ Once the evacuation of members is in progress, emergency services can be contacted. No one should leave the marshalling area until any injuries are assessed by Emergency Services and all Members/Visitors are marked off in the Attendance Book. Once the 'all clear' has been given



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by emergency services, then Members/Visitors can disperse. No-one should re-enter the premises until it is safe to do so. In all cases it is important to be directed by the emergency services, or in their absence, the Emergency Wardens.

3. Emergency Lockdown Plan

Each Chapter should have a plan that details what would happen if a threat or risk to those within the premises comes from outside the Chapter Room. The plan identifies the processes to be followed and it contains the following elements:

- ★ The Emergency Wardens will need to be fully aware of the appropriate 'safe places' for members to go within the Chapter Room. If a lockdown is required, all members will need to move quickly and quietly and hide away from windows and doors. This may mean members getting as low as they can to the floor, remaining against walls, behind furniture etc. Each Chapter Room will be different and each Chapter will have to assess the options available when developing their lockdown plan;
- ★ As all members move to their safe location, Emergency Wardens will need to ensure all doors and windows are locked, blinds drawn; all lights switched off and instruct all to turn OFF any mobile phones (not just on Silent mode). All members need to be instructed to be QUIET and remain so, until the threat or risk has been removed.

Implementing the Plan

Checklists have been provided to assist Chapters in identifying what they need to do to develop their Emergency Plan and maintain it on an annual basis. These checklists can be downloaded from the member's area of the UGCA website at www.oesaustralia.org.au. If you need assistance obtaining a copy, please contact the Worthy Grand Secretary.

The UGCA-FRM-015 Emergency Checklists document provides the following:

- ★ Fire, Electrical and Security Safety Review Checklist – Chapters should follow the checklist, review the items listed and action accordingly. These checks should be performed at least annually.
- ★ Emergency Plan Checklist – Chapters should review the information contained in this guide and complete the checklist accordingly. It lists the items that need to be considered in order to develop an Emergency Plan and should be used annually to ensure the Emergency Plan is maintained.

Once the plan is developed by the Chapter all members and visitors should be made aware that it has been implemented. This is achieved in two ways:

- ★ Complete the last page of this document and place it at the desk near the Attendance Book so that everyone can see it; and
- ★ At each meeting of the Chapter, the Worthy Matron should advise all in attendance who they need to take direction from if an emergency arises. This can be done after the opening and once all distinguished guests have been welcomed into the Chapter room e.g. *"It is my responsibility to ensure the safety of everyone in this Chapter Room. If we need to evacuate, please take direction from our Emergency Wardens (name and point them out) and make yourself familiar with the emergency exits"*.



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Emergency Plan

Chapter Name & Number

Date of effect

Address of Premises:

The above Chapter has implemented an Emergency Plan to ensure the safety and welfare of its Members and Visitors and in accordance with the *Work Health & Safety Act (2011)*.

All Members are reminded to make themselves familiar with the emergency exits of this premises, and to move in a careful, but urgent manner, if directed to do so.

The following Members are designated as Emergency Wardens. They have the responsibility to assess an emergency situation, report back to the Presiding Officer with a recommended plan of action, and to co-ordinate the movement of all those in attendance:

Signed:

Worthy Matron