



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Energy

INSPECTION REPORT

DOE-OIG-20-31

March 2020

**EVACUATION PROCEDURES FOR
EMPLOYEES NEEDING ASSISTANCE**



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

March 4, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNDER SECRETARY OF ENERGY

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer L. Quinones", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

FROM: Jennifer L. Quinones
Assistant Inspector General
for Audits and Inspections
Office of Inspector General

SUBJECT: INFORMATION: Inspection Report on "Evacuation Procedures for Employees Needing Assistance"

BACKGROUND

Department of Energy Order 151.1D, *Comprehensive Emergency Management System*, requires Department officials to develop and participate in an integrated and comprehensive emergency management program. The Order requires that all facilities and equipment be adequate to support an emergency response, including the capability to notify employees of an emergency and to facilitate their safe evacuation from work areas. Emergency management officials at each facility are responsible for maintaining a documented emergency management program. The Department has established Occupant Emergency Plans (OEP) and procedures to ensure the safety and security of its employees and visitors during an emergency at its facilities. The Department's Office of Management oversees the development of the OEP for Department employees located at its Headquarters facility in the James V. Forrestal Building (Forrestal), which includes specific roles and responsibilities assigned to Program Offices. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) Office of Security and Safety provides this oversight for employees located in its Headquarters facility, also located in Washington, DC.

We initiated this inspection to determine whether the Department had plans in place at its Forrestal and FERC Headquarters facilities to accommodate employees needing assistance during an emergency evacuation.

RESULTS OF INSPECTION

Although the Department had an updated plan in place to accommodate employees needing assistance at Forrestal, some supervisors and employees were not fully aware of their roles and responsibilities during an emergency evacuation. Further, we determined that FERC's OEP was outdated and did not reflect the current plan that was in place. According to FERC's Security and Safety official, FERC's OEP had not been updated since 2012, and thus, did not reflect the

current evacuation procedures being used at its Headquarters facility, nor the roles and responsibilities of key emergency personnel that had changed since 2012. Although FERC's OEP had not been updated at the time we began this inspection, evacuation drills indicated that FERC could evacuate employees needing assistance from its facility. Additionally, during the course of our inspection, FERC's OEP was updated to reflect current evacuation procedures and identify the roles and responsibilities of key personnel.

Awareness of Roles and Responsibilities at Forrestal

Although the Department had an updated OEP in place at Forrestal to accommodate employees needing assistance during an emergency evacuation, we found that some supervisors of employees needing assistance were unaware of their specific roles and responsibilities. The OEP states that supervisors are to be knowledgeable of the emergency procedures contained in the OEP, which includes ensuring that employees are aware of and are following emergency procedures. The OEP also requires supervisors to identify employees needing assistance, assign assistants as necessary, and determine specific evacuation procedures to be used during an emergency.

As part of our review, we interviewed 14 employees who may require assistance evacuating, and 14 supervisors who have employees who may require assistance evacuating. We found that none of the 14 supervisors of employees located at Forrestal needing assistance were fully aware of these responsibilities. Specifically, 12 of the 14 supervisors told us that they had not heard of the OEP and were unfamiliar with the information contained in the OEP. One supervisor told us that he did not know where the OEP was located but knew that if he spent some time on the Department's website, he would be able to locate it and understand what his roles and responsibilities were during an emergency evacuation. Another supervisor stated that he had previously been trained for about 30 minutes on evacuation procedures but was unfamiliar with the OEP. Additionally, during our interviews, we identified three supervisors who were not aware that they had employees needing assistance.

Furthermore, during our interviews with employees needing assistance during an evacuation, we found that 10 of the 14 employees were not aware of the OEP. Additionally, we found that 7 of the 14 employees were not trained on evacuation or aware of all available accommodations during an emergency. Specifically, 5 of the 14 employees did not know where the areas of refuge were located (an area of refuge is a designated stairwell where an employee can go if the employee cannot use the stairs), and 2 of the 14 employees did not know how to request assistance in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Program Office Responsibilities

We determined that supervisors and employees were not aware of their roles and responsibilities because Program Office officials were not effectively fulfilling their responsibilities as outlined in the OEP. The purpose of the OEP is to provide for the safety and security of building occupants and minimize the consequences of disasters and emergency events. As such, Appendix B of the OEP defines specific duties and responsibilities required for the execution of the OEP. It also lists several activities for which Program Offices are responsible. This includes

assigning a representative to be the point of contact for the OEP, maintaining a roster of all employees and contractors who work in the space, and establishing procedures to ensure that all persons can be accounted for once they evacuate the building. The OEP also states that Program Offices are responsible for ensuring that all employees and supervisors are trained initially and on an annual basis, and are familiar with the emergency procedures as well as their related responsibilities. However, based on the results of our inspection, we found that some supervisors of employees needing assistance were unaware of their specific roles and responsibilities and that some employees needing assistance were unaware of the OEP.

Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation Awareness

During our review, Office of Management officials told us about a number of new and existing training initiatives that they had developed related to emergency preparedness and evacuation awareness. For example, as part of its efforts to raise awareness of employee roles and responsibilities, the Office of Management had conducted:

- New employee orientation for Department Headquarters employees;
- Briefings, by request, at various program and staff offices for employees and contractors; and
- Supervisory development training in concert with the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer.

Additionally, each year, the Office of Management holds Preparedness Awareness Campaigns in April and September to provide information about emergency preparedness. The Preparedness Awareness Campaigns include emergency preparedness pop-up messages that cycle through on an employee's workstation; an all-hazards preparedness video that plays on the Department's internal video stream; and information tables in the main lobby and in the cafeteria with pamphlets communicating emergency preparedness information.

Despite these efforts, we still identified some supervisors who were unaware of their roles and responsibilities during an emergency situation and some employees needing assistance who were unfamiliar with the OEP. Without comprehensive knowledge of the OEP requirements, employees may not know of their responsibility to notify their supervisors if assistance in an emergency is needed and supervisors may not identify employees needing assistance, assign assistants as necessary, or determine specific evacuation procedures to be used during an emergency.

Occupant Emergency Plan at FERC

FERC's Security and Safety Official informed us that FERC's OEP had not been updated since 2012, and thus, did not reflect the current evacuation procedures being used at its Headquarters facility. Furthermore, it did not specifically identify the roles and responsibilities of key emergency personnel, which had changed since 2012. However, even though the OEP had not been updated, evacuation drills indicated that FERC could safely evacuate employees needing assistance from the facility. In addition, we reviewed information for training and evacuation drills, interviewed a selection of employees and supervisors, and interviewed FERC emergency

management officials to determine whether FERC employees were knowledgeable of the evacuation procedures, had participated in evacuation drills, and were confident that they would be safely evacuated during an emergency. 41 CFR § 102-74.240, *What are Federal Agencies' Occupant Emergency Responsibilities?*, requires, in part, that Federal agencies provide emergency program policy guidance and review plans annually. While a FERC Security and Safety official agreed that the OEP needed to be updated, he stated that due to higher priorities and the lack of resources, he had been unable to update the OEP, as required. However, during the course of our inspection, a new full-time Safety and Occupational Health Program manager position was filled in December of 2018. FERC officials stated that the new hire has assumed responsibility for the OEP. FERC's OEP was updated to reflect current evacuation procedures and identify the roles and responsibilities of key personnel. As such, we are not making any recommendations regarding FERC's OEP.

Successful Emergency Evacuation Plan

Supervisors of employees needing assistance have several responsibilities related to emergency evacuation procedures, including knowing which of their employees need assistance during an emergency, assigning assistants as necessary, and determining specific evacuation procedures to be used during an emergency. FERC officials stated that these responsibilities are assigned across a team of trained volunteer personnel to ensure that persons needing assistance are accommodated and successfully evacuated during emergency events. For example, FERC's procedures call for the Health Unit nurse to collect information from employees needing assistance (long-term or temporary). The nurse, in turn, provides a roster to employees serving as floor monitors so that they can plan for emergency evacuation accommodations (e.g., designating employees who can help individuals needing assistance by ensuring their safe exit down the stairs or via the freight elevator with, as needed, the use of an emergency wheelchair). The floor monitors are employee volunteers on each floor that help during emergency evacuations by ensuring that their floor is cleared in an emergency, reporting the floor's status, and coordinating with the Command Center for employee needs during evacuations. Rather than relying solely on supervisors during emergency evacuation drills, FERC's use of the nurse and floor monitors to assist supervisors was successful in evacuating employees needing assistance during the drills performed.

Other Matters

During the course of our inspection, the Department provided us with an updated 2018 OEP. According to this OEP, evacuation chairs (see photos on the next page) are intended to be used to evacuate employees needing assistance only as a last resort and primarily by the Fire Department. However, in reviewing the policy, we noted that there was a conflict in Appendix H of the 2018 OEP, which stated that an employee could attempt to evacuate the facility by the use of an evacuation chair (if directed). To date, evacuation chairs continue to remain in public stairwells at Forrestal and are readily available to be used by a passerby or an untrained person who might attempt to use them during an emergency situation. During the most recent discussions we had with senior Office of Management officials, we were told that they plan to remove the ambiguous language in Appendix H in the 2018 OEP and post signs prohibiting the

use of the evacuation chairs, except under the direction of the Fire Department. The ambiguous language has now been modified in the OEP and coordinating placards have been posted at all evacuation chair locations.

Figure 1 - Evacuation Chair with Cover



Photo Taken by the Office of Inspector General

Figure 2 - Evacuation Chair without Cover



Photo Taken by the Office of Inspector General

RECOMMENDATION

To improve the safe evacuation of employees needing assistance in an emergency at Forrestal, we recommend that the Under Secretary of Energy require that Program Office officials:

1. Enhance and improve their awareness programs to ensure that their employees and supervisors are aware of their responsibilities during an emergency evacuation.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Management concurred with the report's recommendation. Its corrective actions, taken and planned, are responsive to the recommendation. Specifically, management stated that in order to ensure program office employees and supervisors are aware of their responsibilities under the OEP, the Office of Management will provide two webinars annually, one in April and one in September.

INSPECTOR COMMENTS

Management's response and their corrective actions, taken and planned, are responsive to our recommendation.

cc: Chief of Staff
Director, Office of Management
Executive Director, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVE

We conducted this inspection to determine whether the Department of Energy had plans in place at its James V. Forrestal and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Headquarters facilities to accommodate employees needing assistance during an emergency evacuation.

SCOPE

The inspection was conducted at the Department's Headquarters facility located in the James V. Forrestal building and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission office, both located in Washington, DC. The inspection was performed from June 2017 to September 2019. This inspection was conducted under Office of Inspector General project number S17IS012.

METHODOLOGY

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed applicable Federal, Department, and local laws, regulations, policies, and procedures;
- Determined the number of self-identified mobility and vision-impaired occupants and judgmentally selected 25 percent of the employees and their supervisors to interview;
- Conducted interviews with Department and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission emergency management officials;
- Conducted facility walk-throughs;
- Reviewed training and evacuation drills; and
- Reviewed lessons learned from drills and exercises.

We conducted this inspection in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*. Those standards require that we plan and perform the inspection to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our conclusions and observations based on our inspection objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provided a reasonable basis for our conclusions and observations based on our inspection objective. Accordingly, the inspection included tests of controls and compliance with laws and regulations to the extent necessary to satisfy the inspection objective. Because our review was limited, it would not necessarily have disclosed all internal control deficiencies that may have existed at the time of our inspection. Finally, we did not rely on computer-based data to satisfy our objective.

The Office of Management waived an exit conference on February 24, 2020.

MANAGEMENT COMMENTS



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

February 21, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR JENNIFER L. QUINONES
ASSISTANT INSPECTOR GENERAL
FOR AUDITS AND INSPECTIONS
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

FROM: INGRID KOLB
DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT

SUBJECT: Response to Draft Inspection Report on "evacuation Procedures
for Employees Needing Assistance" (S17IS012)

The Office of Management (MA) appreciates the work done by the Department's Office of Inspector General in conducting a review of DOE's Evacuation Procedures of Employees Needing Assistance. MA is continually looking for ways to improve emergency preparedness awareness and communication with all DOE occupants. The benefit that is realized as a result of this recommendation is a more aware and prepared DOE workforce.

The attachment provides a response to address the recommendations in the report. OIG should direct any questions to Mr. David Brown, Director, Office of Administration, at (202) 287-1714 or david.s.brown@hq.doe.gov.

Attachment



Management Response
Draft Inspection Report on
"Evacuation Procedures for Employees Needing Assistance (S17IS012)"

Recommendation 1: To improve the safe evacuation of employees needing assistance in an emergency at Forrestal, we recommend that the Under Secretary of Energy require that Program Office officials:

Enhance and improve their awareness programs to ensure that their employees and supervisors are aware of their responsibilities during an emergency evacuation.

Management Response: Concur

Corrective Action: To ensure program office employees and supervisors are aware of their responsibilities under the Occupant Emergency Plan (OEP), the Office of Management will provide two webinars annually, one in April and one in September. The OEP is an all hazards guide that informs DOE occupants as to what the correct response action is during a specific emergency. The OEP for each Headquarters DOE facility can be found on Energy.gov (<https://www.energy.gov/management/office-management/employee-services/emergency-preparedness>) and addresses the safe evacuation of employees that need assistance in an emergency.

FEEDBACK

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Office of Inspector General (IG-12)
Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

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