



Commercial Fire & Electrical Systems



Top 10 Ways to Improve **Building Safety**
in the Event of a Fire or Other Emergency

1 Install a Fire Alarm System

The Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) has a number of fire safety standards with regard to construction and fire prevention. Installing a top-of-the-line fire alarm system will protect your building and any occupants. And of course, it is important to install fire alarms in the right places. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) provides detailed information on the best way to install and maintain smoke alarms and fire alarms, including why interconnected alarms increase safety.

We highly recommend the Autocall Fire Detection Systems. They're highly customizable for your particular building(s) and suitable for both new construction and retrofits. Using advanced systems and technology, you can get a system that centrally monitors and controls multiple panels and buildings from one location.

Locations to avoid include:

- Apex of a peaked ceiling
- Near windows
- Near doors
- Near air duct registers/defusers

2 Install an In-Building Radio Communication Network

This new technology is essentially a radio signal booster that helps first responders safely communicate to each other, no matter where they are on your campus or in your building. The official name is the Emergency Responder Radio Communications Systems (ERRCS).

Also known as BDA/DAS, the ERRCS transmits Public Safety radio signals into so called “dead zones” such as elevators, stairwells, basements, parking garages, and other shielded areas. More than just a bright idea, having an ERRCS system in place is increasingly a condition for receiving a Certificate of Occupancy in new construction and retrofits.



3 Install a Full Building Public Address System

Installing a full building public address system is especially important for larger commercial buildings such as transit terminals, hotels, hospitals, and office buildings. It allows you to communicate with everyone in your facility at one time.

While some buildings will use the PA system for ordinary use, others may only need to use it in an emergency. But it becomes invaluable in such a situation. Be sure to work with professionals skilled in the design and implementation of these systems.



4 Install Emergency Lighting Inside

Again, this is something that's required by most state and local building and fire codes for commercial buildings, but you need to ensure that you have an emergency lighting system that will come on if the power goes out, for whatever reason. This can include floodlights at exit doors, floor lighting along corridors, and more.

This will help ensure that the building occupants can follow the emergency evacuation plan.



You want to ensure people can get out in a hurry if they need to.

5 Clearly Mark Emergency Exits and Safety Features

The company that built your facility, whether it's a hotel, retail space, or public transit location, should have installed Exit signs, maps with a X You are Here notice, and signs above and on doors that are to be used for emergency exit only.

Make sure that the bulbs in those lights work and that if a sign starts peeling off a door, that you replace it. You want to ensure people can get out in a hurry if they need to.

6 Improve and Maintain Outdoor Lighting

When your commercial property has a well-lit exterior, you are enhancing the safety of your employees, tenants, guests, and customers. Outdoor lighting along walkways, steps, and ramps helps people see and avoid trip hazards.

Overhead lighting helps do away with dark corners of a parking lot where trouble can lurk. Be sure to replace any broken or burnt-out bulbs ASAP to ensure continued safety.

7 Test and Maintain All Systems

Make sure you're working with professionals who regularly perform systems testing and verification. You don't want to have fire damage because one or more systems wasn't working right. You also want to work with one or more firms who perform system maintenance and repair on your electrical systems, fire alarm system, security system, and more.

This even includes testing your fire extinguishers. They won't do any good if they're not pressurized any more.

8 Periodically Reevaluate Systems and Solutions

As your business or commercial property changes and technology changes, you will want to reevaluate your systems and solutions. Every 1-3 years is probably a good rule of thumb. If a system has become obsolete or is no longer supported, you need to upgrade.

You may also need to expand a system if you've added another building or made extensive renovations.



9 Consider an App for Employees, Tenants, and Frequent Visitors

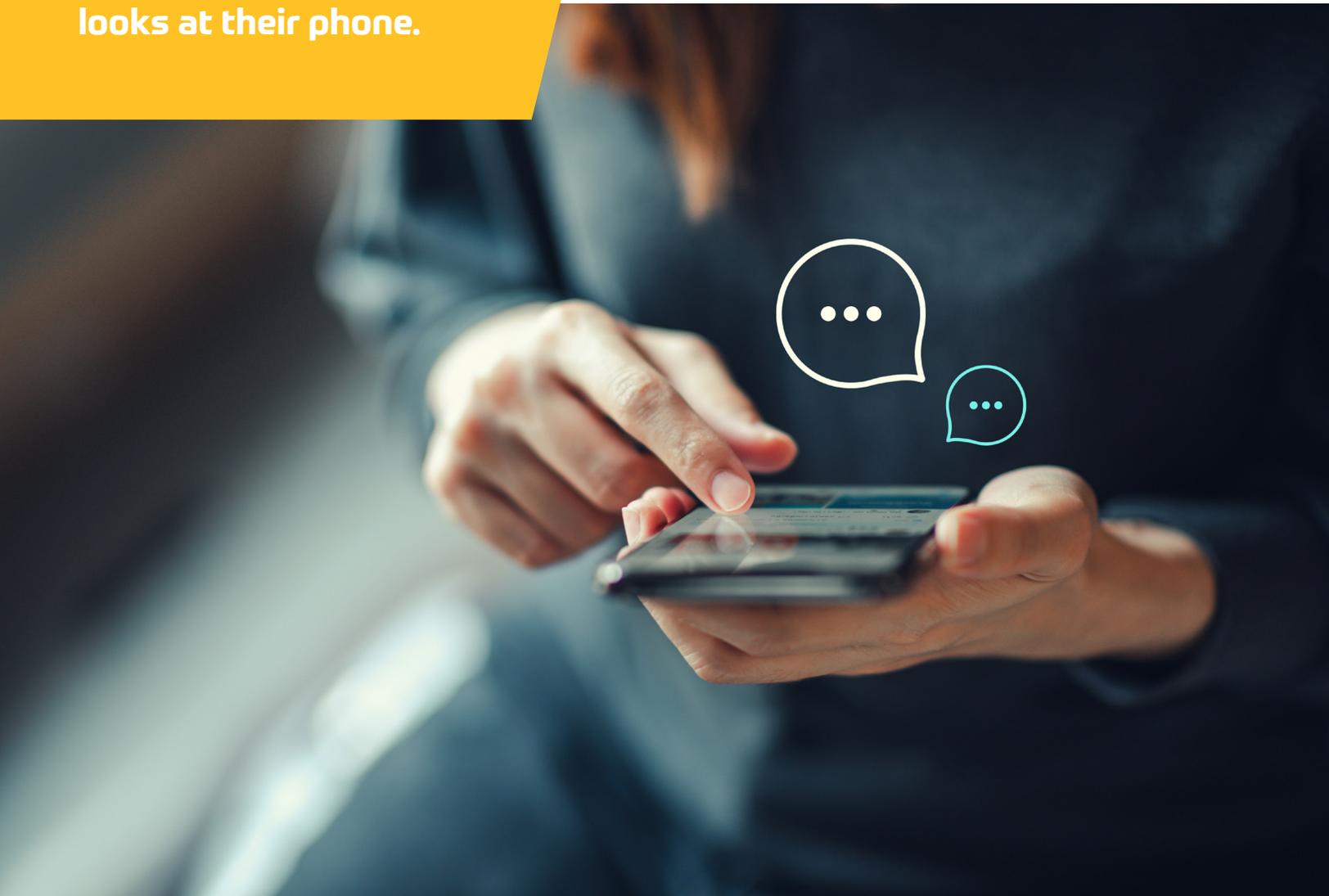
As an added safety measure to be able to notify employees, tenants, and frequent visitors of an emergency, you may want to consider a mobile app. This makes notifying a large number of people at one time very simple. People might not be able to hear a public address system, but everyone looks at their phone when they get a notification.

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10 Conduct Emergency Evacuation Drills with Employees

Yes, really. You remember the fire drills you had in school that you thought were a great excuse to get outside? Those drills are important for the safe evacuation in the event of a fire, bomb threat, or other emergency. Your employees will be entrusted with the safety and security of any tenants or visitors to your facility.

Make sure all of your employees, including new hires, know the location of all of the emergency exits, what escape route to use, etc. Someone's life could depend on it.



In Conclusion...

We hope you've found these tips helpful. While some of them may seem like a no brainer, if you're not working with licensed and certified professionals, you may be putting your building's occupants at risk.

At IGM, we understand that the safety of your building and those who occupy it is of utmost concern. For almost a decade, we've been a trusted resource for Maryland, DC, and northern Virginia facility managers to install, upgrade, test, and maintain reliable fire and electrical systems in their buildings. Reach out today to schedule an assessment of your building's electrical and fire safety needs.

