*When planning your evacuation routes to outside assembly areas and shelters, consider the following:*

**Exit Plan:**

* Plan exit routes so that exterior doors and other exits lead directly onto streets, yards, or other areas giving safe access to open spaces.
* Review your exit plan annually with your local fire officials and building inspector.
* Post copies of the exit plan prominently around the building, in multiple languages if needed.
* Ensure that during off-hour periods, notification systems are active and capable of warning out-of-building staff and passers-by of any potential emergency at the facility.

**Exit Routes:**

* If possible, ensure that your facility has at least two exit routes and that they are far apart.
* Exit routes must be:
  + clearly marked with signs pointing to the nearest exit in plain, legible, high contrast letters, and in multiple languages if needed.
  + clearly visible and may require illumination. Ensure there is backup battery power for any illuminated signs.
  + be placed according to local building codes. Be sure to check these regulations before finalizing the design and placement of your exit instructions.
  + unobstructed by any objects at all times. All doors separating two spaces must be unlocked. If the exit route passes corridors that lead to dead ends, these should be marked “Not an exit.”
  + free of explosive, flammable, or combustible materials.
* If the evacuation procedure calls for the shutdown of utilities, ensure directions to the location of equipment and systems are clearly marked, allowing staff to easily find the shutoff sites and return to the exit route.
* In the event of a fire in a highrise building, occupants of the fire floor and the floors directly above and below should be evacuated immediately. Using the stairs as an exit route, people should move two or more floors below the floor where the fire is burning and wait for further instructions from safety officials.
* Consider marking external portions of the exit route showing the way to the assembly area.
* If the exit route leads to an internal shelter, the entranceway to the shelter should be well-marked, properly illuminated, and easy to open.
* The Emergency Response Team, with the assistance of a knowledgeable facility representative, should verify that outside exit routes conform to relevant regulations concerning the presence of accessibility features like guide rails and ramps.
* Be sure that exit routes, muster points, and internal shelters are large enough to accommodate all building occupants.
* Plan exit routes so that they avoid high-hazard areas such as rivers, ponds, or steep hillsides. Pay special attention to the needs of any staff or visitors who have special needs.

**Exit Doors:**

* The Emergency Response Team should inspect all exit doors at least annually, to verify that they can be opened from the inside, that all hardware is functioning and complies with best practices and local fire codes, and that nothing is blocking their access.
* Verify that all exit doors comply with the relevant local regulations. For example, are exit or external doors required to have a fire-resistance rating of at least one hour? Or do your exits need to be protected by a self-closing fire door that remains closed or automatically closes in an emergency?
* Check that all exit doors open out and away from the interior of the facility.