Guideline 402 - Emergency Procedures (Power Blackout)

Modern library operations (materials, electronic equipment and catalogs...) and the characteristics of this building make the Library particularly vulnerable to power failure. Complete power failure or blackout interrupts services and -- if the blackout occurs after dark -- we evacuate users for the duration of the blackout. Use judgment as to whether to permit users to stay inside, (24-hour study space, the atrium) especially in inclement weather. Our foremost concern in this emergency is for safety of persons and then of library assets.

Report emergencies to Campus Police (x55555) and outages to Physical Plant (x52550).

I. Decision Process When Ranking Librarians are Not Present.

Sound reactions and decisions require good information.

1. Security officer or others in Circulation should call Physical Plant (x52550, x53220, or x52201) to determine cause and extent of power failure and predicted restoration time. Also tell Physical Plant of any persons trapped in elevators.
2. Call Library Director or alternate (see list, Appendix A) for advice and decision re closing library.
3. Notify Public Safety (x53133) of library status (either temporarily evacuating, or closing, or still awaiting decision to close) and also of persons trapped in elevators.
4. If Library Administration is open and has not otherwise been informed, call to make sure they are aware of the situation.

II. Daylight or Partial Blackout: If there is enough light perform these steps:

1. All staff should gather at the security desk with their units’ emergency flashlights to receive further instructions. In this situation, all staff are expected to assist the security officer or alternate who will need help to check bags (see section “Exit Control” below), guide users, check elevators for any persons trapped, and patrol stacks to find problems.
2. Do not force users to leave library areas which receive adequate window lighting (e.g., Phase III tower) unless the Director or ranking Librarian in charge determines that the entire building must be closed due to safety or security concerns. Assume that the building will remain open until a decision is made.
3. Announce to users: “At this time the building will remain open and library users are welcome to stay. However, we advise that you avoid using the elevators until power is restored. If you wish to leave, please use the main exit on the first floor.” Post notices over elevator buttons: “Please do not use elevators during power outage.” Be sure to remove these notices when power is restored.
4. Because the book theft detection units do not have power, the security officer or alternate must carefully inspect all bags, briefcases, purses, etc. Library materials cannot be removed from the building unless it can be verified that they were properly charged out.

III. Closing

Very seldom will an indefinite temporary evacuation turn into a complete closing. In the past, Physical Plant staff have restored power within an hour or so, enabling resumption of services.

If the Director of the Library or alternate decides to close the building for the day/night:

1. Staff should return to work areas, secure them for closing, and then return to the security desk to provide assistance.
2. At this time, and not before, all supervisors should telephone their next shift of staff and student assistants and tell them not to report to work.
3. Circulation staff will draw up and post explanatory signs on each of the entrance doors.
4. Reference staff should change “hours open” phone message and, if possible, add a web page announcement to the Library home page.
5. Security officer should follow standard closing procedure, setting security systems, lowering grill (manually, if power to the grill is off), etc.
6. Staff should understand that this evacuation of users is a temporary indefinite interruption of services pending further decision by appropriate administrators (for example, Library Director or alternate, or a campus police officer).

IMPORTANT: If the security grill cannot be lowered manually, users must be cleared from the Atrium and the exterior entry doors to the Atrium must be locked at the time the building is closed.

A. Announcements for Evacuation

1. The security officer or designee should immediately announce the situation, e.g.: “The library/campus has suffered a power failure and we must evacuate the building. Carefully make your way to the main exit on the first floor.” If the PA system is not working, these announcements are made by walking through the entire building.
2. Additional announcements if needed and as appropriate.
3. Announce decision to close for day/night or to reopen.

B. Exit Control

1. Immediately after decision to close the security officer or alternate should be stationed at the security gate to the Library and explain the situation to persons seeking entry. While it is preferred that additional persons not enter and add to the existing security burden, if they wish to enter the building for safety sake (e.g., darkness, weather), staff may admit them as long as they agree to remain in the Atrium.
2. Advise users to leave the building via the main exit. Because the book theft detection units do not have power, the security officer or alternate must carefully inspect all bags, briefcases, purses, etc. Library materials cannot be removed from the building unless it can be verified that they were properly charged out.
3. Inform those exiting the building at night that they may wish to use the campus telephone in the building lounge to call Public Safety for escort service. Do not allow users to use the security desk telephone -- that line must be kept open for incoming/outgoing calls regarding the blackout or other emergency.
4. Users may wish to re-enter the bookstacks or other areas to retrieve books, coats, etc. Please help insofar as possible, but remind them we cannot have users wandering in a darkened building. Do not loan flashlights to users; accompany them instead. Be alert for users trying to use matches to light their way; open flames are a fire hazard and should be extinguished.
5. All staff should gather at the security desk with their units’ emergency flashlights to receive further instructions. In this situation, all staff are expected to assist the security officer or alternate who will need help to check bags, guide users, gather information, make announcements and patrol stacks to find problems.
6. Before leaving staff should:
   a) Instruct users to leave the building carefully by the main exit, leading the way if necessary.
b) Check elevators to see if they are working; if not, check for anybody trapped as follows: check at each floor in Phases 1, 2, and 3 by tapping on doors and asking if anyone is in the elevator; calm anyone who is trapped and assure them you will report this to security staff; Security officer or alternate should immediately call the physical plant and campus police to inform them of the problem and get information from them regarding what their plans are for dealing with it; call them again periodically to check on progress if none is seen on site.

c) Patrol building to find and note the location of any handicapped users who need assistance in evacuating and inform the security officer or designee who will coordinate evacuation of these users.

d) Be alert to obstructions in aisles and if possible move them aside (e.g., kickstools, booktrucks or chairs).

e) If emergency power is out, walk each floor and public stairway with a flashlight to assist users out.

7. Allow users to linger in the Atrium for a time on the reasonable expectation that power will be restored fairly soon.

C. Follow-up Measures

Whether the Library reopened following a temporary evacuation or closed for the remainder of the day/night after a power blackout, certain steps must be taken to ensure full recovery:

1. If not already done, Security officer or alternate notifies the Director or alternate who will notify all staff.
2. All staff return emergency flashlights to units and recharge.
3. Unit heads or designees to examine condition of unit equipment, reporting problems or damage, if any, to Director or designee.
4. Director or alternate evaluates Library response to blackout in consultation with other appropriate staff.

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