Fire Evacuation Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Animal Shelter Emergency Procedures

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to ensure the safe and orderly evacuation of staff, visitors, and animals in the event of a fire or suspected fire at the facility.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, and visitors within the animal shelter.

3. Immediate Response

In the event of a fire or suspected fire, the following actions must be taken immediately:

• Activate the nearest fire alarm

• Call 911

• Evacuate all people from the building

• The designated Incident Lead will communicate with the fire department upon their arrival

No individual may re-enter the building unless authorized by fire officials.

4. Evacuation Priority

Evacuation priority shall be as follows:

1. Human life

2. Animals

3. Property and records

5. Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Roles may be combined during low staffing situations. All staff should be familiar with these duties.

Incident Lead

• Communicates with fire department

• Provides information on animal locations and hazards

• Confirms staff accountability

Dog Evacuation Team

• Uses slip leads to evacuate dogs

• Evacuates calm animals first

• Marks and reports aggressive or fearful dogs

Cat and Small Animal Evacuation Team

• Uses carriers only

• Evacuates animals by room or ward

• Ensures carriers are secure prior to transport

Front Desk / Public Area Lead

• Clears lobby, offices, and restrooms

• Directs visitors to evacuation zones

Accountability Lead

• Conducts staff headcount

• Tracks evacuated animals (approximate count acceptable)

6. Animal Evacuation Procedures

Dogs

• Use slip leads stored on kennel rows

• One dog per handler unless trained otherwise

• Do not attempt to evacuate dangerous animals if unsafe

Cats

• Transport in carriers only

• Emergency containment using towels or pillowcases is permitted only if necessary

Other Animals

• Use pre-designated containers

• Follow species-specific handling instructions

7. Evacuation Routes

Primary evacuation routes should be used whenever possible. Secondary routes should be used if primary routes are blocked. Elevators shall not be used during a fire emergency.

8. Evacuation Zones

Primary Evacuation Zone: Designated outdoor safe area
Secondary Evacuation Zone: Pre-identified off-site relocation location

Animals must remain separated by species and temperament when possible.

9. Post-Evacuation Procedures

- Conduct staff headcount
- Confirm animal accountability
- Document incident details
- Do not re-enter facility without authorization

10. Training and Review

- Fire evacuation drills shall be conducted at least annually
- New staff shall receive training during onboarding
- This SOP shall be reviewed annually and updated as needed