

# Evacuation Process

## Quick Reference Guide



### Terminology

- **Warning:** A situation exists, or is developing, that could present a risk to the community that those who could be affected need to be aware of.
- **Evacuation:** A situation exists where it is not safe for individuals to remain where they are, and they are told by officials to leave.
- **Shelter in Place:** A situation where it is not safe for individuals where they are, but it is safer to remain inside a building with specific instructions.

### Initiation Process

- When an incident may lead to a situation where individuals will be asked to evacuate, officials should issue a Warning. The Warning should include information on the incident, where more information can be obtained, and what will happen if the situation worsens.



- When it is not safe for individuals to remain where they are, and Evacuation should be issued by officials. Whenever possible, Evacuations should involve in person contact of those affected to provide the Evacuation Handout, log status of occupants, and provide answers and direction.
  - In situations where individuals decide to stay against the official's direction, it is preferable to have them fill out the Evacuation Waiver.
- When an unsafe situation exists, but it is safer for those affected to stay inside a building, a Shelter in Place directive should be issued by officials. Shelter in Place directives can be hard to deliver in person due to the typical incident types, however it is also critical to provide clear instructions to those affected.

### Considerations

- Unless an Evacuation is implemented by resolution under 10-3-406, MCA, it is considered voluntary. People may choose to stay on their property, but this does not mean they can come and go from their property at will. Typically, if they leave, they are kept out.
- Warnings should not be utilized in conjunction with the word evacuation. We issue Warnings, not "evacuation warnings." Best practices have shown that one the word evacuation is mentioned, people lose the rest of the message.
- Gallatin County's Evacuation Handout contains opt in information for a dedicated Evacuee Contact List. It is important to have those being evacuated get this information and subscribe so we can provide specific information directly to those who have been displaced.
- In situations where individuals choose not to leave, it is recommended that they complete an evacuation waiver. This often illustrates to the individuals the magnitude of the incident, forces them to acknowledge that they are knowingly going against the direction to Evacuate, and provides a good record of who stayed.
- It is recommended that public safety personnel keep packets of the evacuation related material in their vehicles, so it is ready to utilize.

### Reference

- [Warning Handout Template](#)
- [Evacuation Handout Template](#)
- [Evacuation Contact Log Template](#)
- [Evacuation Waiver](#)
- [Gallatin County Attorney's Opinion on Evacuations](#)