



# How To Run Safety Drills With Alertable for Microsoft Teams

The 7 Steps to Mastering Safety Drills for Remote Teams

**PEASI**

p: (888) 400-5661  
e: [info@peasi.com](mailto:info@peasi.com)

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# Introduction

While nobody anticipates facing a disaster or emergency, the reality is that these events can strike anywhere, anytime, and affect anyone, including employees and businesses. Consider the example of fires: Between 2010 and 2019, Canada experienced approximately 13,297 workplace-related fires. In Ontario alone, the financial toll of fires in 2019 amounted to an estimated \$968 million in losses, with over 13% of these fires originating in workplaces. Even more alarming are the human costs, with a total of 793 injuries and 67 fatalities reported.

Given the difficulty of thinking clearly in crises, the most effective approach is to prepare for emergencies well in advance. By doing so, you can develop a comprehensive emergency response plan during calm periods. While we all hope for favourable outcomes, it's essential to prepare ourselves for unforeseen challenges.



The COVID-19 pandemic significantly transformed the landscape of our workplaces, necessitating a shift in how we approach workplace safety. While fire drills and evacuations remain crucial, the rise of remote or hybrid work arrangements among a significant portion of our workforce demands a reevaluation of our approach to these drills.

During the pandemic, many activities, including workplace fire drills, were put on hold. However, businesses can no longer postpone these essential drills. They are essential to:

- Maintain certifications
- Remain compliant with industry regulations
- Qualify for privileges, rebates, and discounts

Given the evolving nature of businesses and the prevalence of remote work, the question arises: How do we proceed with workplace drills in this new environment?

# The 7 Steps to Mastering Safety Drills for Remote Teams

Engaging incident response teams in planning and executing workplace drills when they're working remotely presents unique challenges. How can you effectively coordinate these drills and ensure they're beneficial for your organization? Here's a comprehensive guide with practical examples for each step:

## Step 1: Develop a Plan

Before conducting any drill, it's crucial to outline a clear plan. Consider the type of drill needed based on your company's incident response plan. For example, if your organization deals with chemical hazards, a simulated tabletop exercise may be appropriate. Define the goals and outcomes you hope to achieve, such as improving evacuation procedures or testing communication protocols. Let's say your goal is to reduce evacuation time by 20% compared to the previous drill.

Utilize Alertable for Microsoft Teams to streamline your drill planning process. Easily upload your documented drill plan into the Files area for increased visibility and accessibility. Furthermore, leverage Alertable for Microsoft Teams to notify all employees about the upcoming drill, directing them to the Files tile for detailed information. This proactive approach empowers staff to review and validate the plan and its goals ahead of time, facilitating any necessary adjustments before the drill commences. Plus, any updates or changes to the plan can be seamlessly communicated using Alertable for Microsoft Teams, ensuring everyone stays informed and prepared.

## Step 2: Prepare

Before the drill, ensure everyone is well-informed by briefing your incident response team and key stakeholders, including building management, fire department, local officials, and businesses. Review everyone's roles and responsibilities thoroughly.

Consider key questions such as the potential presence of visitors or the public during the drill and whether industry regulating authorities need to be invited. Ensure all necessary equipment, such as safety kits and fire extinguishers, is in good condition and readily accessible.

Challenge your staff during drills by introducing unexpected scenarios. For example, ask them to block typical exits, designate restricted zones, or simulate injuries to prompt effective responses.

These activities help familiarize your team with workplace environments and emergency supplies, promoting safety awareness and proper equipment usage. Vary drill scenarios to prevent complacency and build competence and confidence.

Utilize Alertable for Microsoft Teams for effective drill preparation:

- Conduct online meetings to brief the incident response team and stakeholders on roles and responsibilities.
- Upload necessary documents and forms to Alertable for Microsoft Teams for easy access before, during, and after the drill.
- Assign tasks for different phases of the drill and designate responsibilities accordingly.
- Schedule meetings for stakeholder engagement, progress updates, and post-drill evaluations to ensure comprehensive preparation and follow-up.

## Step 3: Start the Drill

Ensure that your observers are positioned appropriately, whether in the office or remotely via Alertable for Microsoft Teams. Initiate the drill by issuing electronic notifications, activating alarms, and making announcements over the PA system.

As the effectiveness of drills in a hybrid workforce is under scrutiny, it's crucial to adapt to ensure compliance with safety standards. Engage all workers, both onsite and remote, to guarantee familiarity with safety and evacuation protocols, regardless of their physical location.

Utilize Alertable for Microsoft Teams to commence drills by sending notifications via Microsoft Teams, SMS text, or email. These alerts can be distributed across the entire company or selectively targeted to specific teams, departments, or offices. With Alertable for Microsoft Teams, you can effortlessly notify individuals of ongoing drills, irrespective of their location.

## Step 4: Secure the Area

It's essential to secure the surrounding area, even at home, to minimize the impact of disasters on employee well-being and to prevent productivity loss during recovery. Actions like closing windows and doors, clearing staircases, and securing equipment are crucial. Employees should be aware of safety measures such as seeking higher ground during floods or taking cover under a desk during earthquakes.

Worker safety is paramount, regardless of their location. Consideration should be given to securing company equipment at remote locations to prevent collateral damage. This includes

securing computer equipment, filing cabinets, and personal items like lawn furniture or recreational equipment. Loose debris should be cleared or anchored, and doors and windows should be closed or locked to deter threats.

Additionally, it's essential to handle chemicals properly to reduce harm. Alertable for Microsoft Teams offers a checklist tool to assist workers in creating personalized checklists tailored to their unique situations. These checklists can be saved, updated, and reused for future drills or real incidents. Employees can use Alertable for Microsoft Teams to upload photos and videos documenting their efforts and any resulting damage, facilitating effective assessment and response.

## Step 5: Do a Headcount

Headcounts can be quite challenging, often resulting in a frantic search for individuals. In the past, it was difficult to determine if missing persons were absent or in need of assistance on the premises. This process involved making numerous calls or emails to track them down, consuming valuable time.

But how do you ensure an accurate headcount when your staff may not all be present in the office? What if someone responsible for securing the facility isn't physically there? In today's world, it's essential to have a reliable method to check in with all employees, regardless of their location.

Alertable for Microsoft Teams offers a solution to streamline headcounts. The Check-In tool serves as a virtual assembly point, displaying all individuals who need to be accounted for and their current status. Those unaccounted for can be easily contacted via email, text, or phone. Additionally, team members can collaborate to determine the whereabouts of missing individuals. With Alertable for Microsoft Teams, you can conduct headcounts efficiently, even eliminating the need for physical assembly points and avoiding miscounts, especially with large teams.

## Step 6: Observe, Track, and Respond

For observers, it's crucial to not only monitor how areas are being secured and headcounts are progressing but also to pay attention to other aspects of the drill. Taking detailed notes during the drill can provide valuable insights for evaluation afterward. Keep track of whether the drill is running more efficiently than previous ones.

Active participants must be proactive in responding to the various scenarios presented during the drill, which test the company's resilience, communication, and coordination. Conduct both scheduled and unscheduled meetings with the incident response team, stakeholders, and staff. Maintain transparent communication by providing regular verbal and written updates to ensure

everyone is well-informed and can plan accordingly. Don't forget to communicate when the drill concludes to prevent unnecessary waiting.

Alertable for Microsoft Teams simplifies the process for observers by allowing them to take notes and upload supporting photos or videos in real time. These notes can be accessed by anyone on the incident response team and easily exported for comprehensive after-action reporting. The platform also facilitates real-time monitoring of checklists and headcounts, with a dashboard providing insights into task efficiency. Meetings can be seamlessly organized to accommodate participants from anywhere, and all information filed from the field, including notes and incident reports, is readily accessible. Additionally, Alertable for Microsoft Teams streamlines the process of ending the drill and notifying everyone that they can resume normal activities.

## Step 7: Evaluate

To ensure the effectiveness of a drill, thorough evaluation is essential, followed by updates to the company's incident response plans based on the gathered insights. Engage with observers to collect valuable information, including field notes, pictures, and videos. Host a meeting to gather their observations from various perspectives, even those observing remotely. Their insights can drive improvements in procedures for future drills and emergencies.

Assess key aspects such as the efficiency of check-in processes, the timely completion of checklists, and the utilization of communication tools by the incident response team during unforeseen challenges. Identify any difficulties in distinguishing on-site and remote workers and explore potential safety enhancements and equipment needs. Encourage employees to share their experiences and suggest improvements, as their input is invaluable for refining emergency response protocols.

Encouraging full employee participation in drills can be challenging. Address issues such as employees ignoring drills or those working remotely by implementing incentives like team competitions or offering rewards such as extended lunch breaks or early dismissal for meeting drill goals. Consider implementing a program to reward remote workers for safety-related tasks like checking smoke detectors or maintaining fire extinguishers.

Alertable for Microsoft Teams streamlines the post-drill evaluation process and saves time by providing automated metrics and analytics. This eliminates reliance solely on observer notes, allowing for quicker preparation of after-action reports for post-mortems, compliance, and claims. All data in Alertable for Microsoft Teams is securely logged and timestamped for easy auditing, and it facilitates online collaboration to gather additional insights for validation and supplementation of findings.

## Conclusion

Regular mock drills are as crucial in the workplace as they are in schools. Just as students practice fire drills to make safety routines second nature, employees need regular emergency drills to ensure readiness and instill confidence. By holding drills at least twice a year for each major type of emergency, organizations can familiarize their staff with safety protocols and maintain preparedness levels. These drills serve as invaluable tools for identifying gaps in emergency response plans and building employee confidence. Moreover, they help employees remain calm during emergencies, preventing panic by providing clear instructions on how to stay safe.

However, the shift to remote work presents new challenges for conducting workplace drills. Planning, executing, and evaluating drills can be more time-consuming, especially when time is already scarce. Fortunately, Alertable for Microsoft Teams offers a solution to this challenge, streamlining the drill process and making it more efficient. Even for companies not fully embracing remote work, Alertable for Microsoft Teams remains highly effective, saving time and enhancing emergency preparedness across the organization.