



Epilogue

When I Speak to Your Boss

If ever I got the chance to speak to the chief executive of your organization I would want to convince him or her that Emergency Evacuation Planning is a vital aspect of his or her responsibility for the welfare of their people. There would only be time for me to make five points; I would need to be blunt and get straight to the point.

1. *First, I would want to set the mood for thinking about emergency evacuation issues:*

“Do you recall the 9/11 collapse of the twin towers and how so many people were unable to reach safety in time? That event, and there are many others, demonstrates the need for effective evacuation procedures.”

2. *I might present some scenarios that might trigger memories of recent events for your boss:*

“It is almost inevitable that there will be an emergency on your premises at some time; it could be a fire, a flood, a riot, a power outage, a storm, an accident, an explosion, or an earthquake. Apart from the moral obligation, there is a legal obligation for you to provide proper emergency evacuation facilities for all those who use or visit your premises. Evidence of adequate preparations and practice will be called for at the inevitable inquiry if anyone comes to any harm.”

3. *I would draw your boss’s attention to the social media which now provide instant, uncontrollable global coverage of any untoward event:*

“I would be concerned about any media speculation about the cause, attributable to negligence or apathy, of any trauma in relation to failure to evacuate your building successfully, because that could bring your company to its knees. A successful evacuation will probably go unnoticed, but a photograph or tweet of someone suffering will attract worldwide attention.”

4. *Executives usually make most of their judgments in relation to value for money or some form of cost-benefit analysis. I would explain:*

“Emergency Evacuation Planning is a relatively small investment which brings a great deal of benefit and protection. It will enhance employee morale which, in turn, improves customer relationships. It demonstrates a cautious, risk-aware, approach which may be reflected in overheads such as insurance premiums and employee benefits. It is evidence of good corporate citizenship and a caring employer.”

5. *The worst-case scenario for an executive is to be confronted by the press without a satisfactory answer to a searching question. My question would be:*

“How would you cope with journalists who heard that someone had been trapped on your premises? They would assume negligence on your behalf and would be determined to find someone to blame, and the target of the blame is likely to be you!”