



Preparing for Emergencies

October 2022

Many of our current Peaceful Villa residents have lived in their one-story homes for many years. With the new development proposing a three- and four- story design, some residents have expressed fears about safety during emergencies such as earthquakes and fires. The design team takes safety very seriously and will ensure that all building code requirements are fully addressed.

In addition, Home Forward is committed to increased safety trainings for all residents living in Home Forward managed properties. The newly launched agency website has a major new section addressing “Safety” (www.homeforward.org/)

Building features that address occupant safety

■ Safe exiting during emergencies

- **Strong and resilient structures.** The buildings’ structural systems are being designed to meet and/or exceed the current Oregon Structural Specialty Code, a model building code that is updated every three years to improve safety and incorporate advances in technology.
- **Stairs for safe exiting.** The width of the exit stairs in each building greatly exceeds code minimum and therefore allows for faster and easier emergency egress.
- **Emergency power.** In the event of an electrical outage, emergency back-up power — supplied via generator or battery storage — will be provided to illuminate exit paths and exit signs and to operate the elevators (when it is safe to use again after an event).
- **Units at grade.** The current design provides over 50 dwelling units at the ground level, most with direct access to the exterior via walk-up entrances. Those residents not wishing to live on the second or third floor will have options to request a home on the ground floor.

■ Specific measures related to fire safety

- **Construction rated for fire resistance.** Per current Fire Life Safety code, our units, corridors and exit stairways will have fire-rated floors, ceilings and walls to provide safe exiting in the event of fire, explosions, etc. The enclosures around the elevators and exit stairs are designed to provide a minimum of 2 hours of fire resistance to enable ample time for evacuation.
- **Fully sprinklered buildings.** We have specified a comprehensive, commercial-grade fire sprinkler system that provides more protection than a typical residential-grade suppression system. Fire sprinklers will be installed in all units, corridors, common areas, and even attic and closet spaces.
- **No natural gas lines.** Our all-electric building systems eliminate the need for natural gas lines on our site and inside the new buildings. Thus we are able to remove a hazardous, combustible substance that is particularly dangerous during natural disasters.

Resident education: preparation prior and resilience after potential events

- **Home Forward trainings.** At other Home Forward properties, Resident Services staff have assisted with resident organizing for preparation activities. This is often accomplished by residents choosing to coordinate efforts by floor or specific sections of a building. In addition to pre-planning and development of personal emergency kits, neighbors helping neighbors is often the key to resilience after an emergency.
- **Coordination with Richmond NET members (Portland’s Neighborhood Emergency Teams).** Similar to other neighborhoods throughout the region, planning efforts will be coordinated with the trained NET members. These nearby neighbors are often first responders prior to emergency officials (ambulance, police and fire) being able to arrive on the scene after a major event such as a destructive earthquake.

Property management supports

■ **Coordination with first responders.** Staff from Home Forward will reach out to Portland Fire officials to confirm messaging to residents about what to do during specific types of emergencies. For example, in some buildings local fire marshals may recommend “sheltering in place” as the best option when a fire alarm goes off. In other buildings, residents may be encouraged to safely exit the building immediately.

■ **Purchase of safe exiting equipment for people with mobility issues.** Home Forward’s “high-rise” buildings (typically over 4-stories or more) are being equipped with special carry devices to assist those with mobility concerns to exit via stairwells. We anticipate this discussion to be part of the resident meetings in the future. ■