

# Seward Memorial Library

## Emergency and Safety Policy

Adopted June 13, 2006; Last Reviewed March 4, 2026

The Seward Memorial Library attempts to provide a safe environment for all who use our facility as well as a safe repository for library materials of all types. Despite our best efforts, situations may arise of an emergency nature. These guidelines for foreseeable but unplanned emergencies which may occur are designed to reduce risk to life and materials. Step by step procedures are maintained by the library staff. In the event of a major disaster involving a wider section of our community, the library will adhere to the City of Seward's standard operating procedures.

### Weather Emergencies

#### A. Tornado or Violent Storm

- a. When warranted, staff will monitor weather conditions using television, radio, and/or the internet. When Seward County is in a watch or a warning, staff will follow the appropriate library procedures established for the situation. These procedures are reviewed by staff at least annually and are updated as needed.
- b. If time allows, patrons must either leave the building or take shelter in the library's lower level when notified by staff that a tornado warning is in effect. Children 15 and under attending a library program during a tornado warning must evacuate to the lower level unless released directly to their adult caregiver. After the main level of the library is evacuated, all doors will be locked except for those leading to the lower level. Access to the lower level will remain open to the public throughout the warning period.
- c. If the tornado strikes with little or no warning and there is no time to evacuate to the lower level, patrons and staff should take shelter away from windows and exterior walls, hiding under furniture if they cannot get to an interior room. Everyone should protect their heads as much as possible. The open stacks area should be avoided.

#### B. Snowstorms

- a. The library may open late or close early when winter weather conditions present a danger to staff and patrons. The library will follow the actions of the City of Seward during normal business hours and the Library Director shall be authorized to close the library during other times.
- b. Maximum effort will be made to maintain regular library operating hours. However, if the library is closed due to bad weather, staff will post notices on all entrances and online and record an announcement on the library answering machine. The Library Director will notify the Board President of the closing as soon as reasonable.
- c. Programs for children will be cancelled whenever the Seward School District calls off school because of inclement weather, whether or not the library closes. In case of inclement weather, adult programs will be held at staff discretion.

# Facility Emergencies

## A. Fire

- a. At the first indication of smoke or flame or if the fire alarm is activated by a patron, staff should investigate the situation to determine location and extent. If the problem can be easily contained, staff should proceed to do so. If there is any doubt about controlling the fire, staff should immediately call 911 and then evacuate the building. If needed, staff should activate the closest alarm to notify all patrons.
- b. The elevator should never be used to evacuate the lower level.
- c. Staff should familiarize themselves with alarm locations and with the location and operation of fire extinguishers in the building. Annual review of the process of turning off the fire alarms in case of mistaken warnings will be scheduled.
- d. Library staff should await emergency personnel at both entrances to notify them of the location of the fire and then gather as a group at the west entrance of City Hall.

## B. Loss of utilities

- a. If electrical power is lost for at least two hours or if the loss makes the temperature or the lighting in the library difficult for working, the library may close until the problem is resolved. Annual checks of emergency lighting should be done by the City's Electrical Department.
- b. If water is shut off to the library, all restrooms should be closed immediately. Staff may be able to use facilities at City Hall or neighboring businesses.
- c. If the natural gas supply to the library is interrupted during winter months, the back-up boiler will not be available to supplement the heat provided by our heat pump system. If the temperature drops enough to make working in or using the library uncomfortable, the library should close until problem is resolved.

## C. Hazardous materials

- a. If carbon monoxide detectors warn of danger or if other chemical fumes are noticeable, staff should immediately evacuate the building and call 911 for assistance.
- b. If a traffic accident in the vicinity of the library involves hazardous waste materials of any type, library staff should follow the directives of City Hall and the Seward Police Department or other emergency personnel.

## D. Plumbing problems or water leaks

- a. If a plumbing problem is limited to a single area, staff will close off the affected facility and call for professional assistance if they are unable to resolve the problem.
- b. If a plumbing problem or water leak affects major parts of the library, the Library Director may close the library if deemed necessary. City crews can be called upon for immediate assistance and professional help should be found as soon as possible.

## Personal Safety

### A. Health Emergencies or Accidents

- a. Staff should exercise caution when assisting anyone with a health complaint. Make the affected person comfortable and call for emergency personnel immediately in the event of a serious problem. Staff should not attempt to provide first aid unless certified. At no time should staff ever dispense medication, including aspirin, to the public.
- b. Following the incident, staff should complete the City's Accident Report form and submit it to the Library Director and/or City Administrator.

### B. Patron Unruliness

- a. Library patrons are expected to conduct themselves in a manner which shows respect to other patrons and to staff. Disruptive behavior which disturbs others or destroys property will not be tolerated. Disruptive behavior includes but is not limited to any violation of the Rules for Patron Behavior or the Public Internet and Computer Acceptable Use Policy.
- b. Parents/Guardians are responsible for the behavior of their children while in the library. Children who are being disruptive and do not respond to a staff request to stop will be asked to leave the building and if necessary the parent will be called to pick the child up from the library. If a parent is unavailable after one hour, the Seward Police Department will be contacted.
- c. Staff members may handle patron situations directly if they feel comfortable doing so. Or, they may report the problem patron to the supervisor on duty or approach the patron with other staff members. If the situation escalates or if the patron refuses to listen to staff, the police shall be called immediately.
- d. Staff members may dismiss the offender for the rest of the day or for up to two weeks depending on the severity of the offense. Repeat offenders or those who commit an extremely serious offense may be permanently barred from the library facility by the Library Director. Appeals of the dismissal must be submitted in writing one week prior to regular Library Board meetings and will be reviewed by the Library Director and members of the Library Board at the regular meeting following receipt of the appeal.
- e. Patrons who remain on library premises after being asked to leave, or patrons who enter the library during the time period in which they have been banned from the library, will be subject to arrest and prosecution for trespassing.
- f. Staff members will use standard internal communication tools to make others aware of patrons who are temporarily or permanently barred from the library. Within two working days of any incident regarding dismissals extending beyond the same day, staff members will record in writing their version of the situation.

## Threats

### A. Bomb Threat

- a. Staff receiving a bomb threat call will try to keep the caller on the line as long as possible, noting every detail about the caller's voice, background noises, and so forth. If the caller

doesn't mention the location and detonation time of the bomb this information should be requested. If a personal cell phone is available, police should be called when the threat is being made. Other staff should get everyone out and at least 600 feet away from the building.

- b. When the caller hangs up the phone or when a bomb threat is received in other ways besides the phone, police should be called immediately to let them know the situation as well as the location of the library staff person in charge after evacuation of the building.
- c. When questioned by police, staff will provide them with the information taken on the phone. Staff may be excused from work at that point, making sure the Library Director has their contact information for calls to return to work after the building has been cleared.
- d. If a bomb threat has been received at a nearby facility, evacuation of the library will be based on the judgment of emergency personnel. Library staff should again make sure the Library Director has their contact information so they can be called back to work when the building is cleared.

## B. Active Shooter

- a. An active shooter is an individual(s) actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area; in most cases, active shooters use firearms(s), are unpredictable, and have no pattern or method to their selection of victims.
- b. The ability to quickly and safely evacuate is critical to surviving an active shooter scenario which is often over within 10-15 minutes. Contacting 9-1-1 immediately is vital to ensuring first responders arrive quickly.
- c. Only authorized personnel are granted access to the Library facilities during and immediately after an active shooter situation. Staff must be familiar with the evacuation routes and practice using the nearest exit without exposing themselves and patrons to danger.
- d. Temporary or prolonged closures following the incident will be disclosed to the public in a timely manner, per coordination with and direction from first responders and law enforcement.

## Reporting Emergencies

All emergency situations should be reported to the Library Director as soon as possible. The Library Director will contact the President of the Library Board and the City Administrator as appropriate. The full Library Board will be informed of the emergency at the next regular board meeting.

Because timely and accurate reporting of emergencies is crucial, library staff should refer to the City of Seward's policies and procedures before information regarding emergencies is made public. Information about non-emergency situations that may affect the public should be approved by the Library Director before being released.