Evacuation Procedures for Hotels Fatality File

Chained fire exits blamed as 78 die in hotel fire

A kitchen fire raced through a 17-story luxury hotel in this beach resort yesterday, killing at least 78 people as guests found themselves trapped behind locked emergency exits. An American girl clutching her teddy bear was among those airlifted to safety.

Crowds on the sidewalk watched in horror as people screamed for help and waved towels from windows on the upper floors. One man jumped to his death from the 11th floor.

Police said 64 people were injured and more bodies may be inside the 450-room Royal Jomtien Hotel.

Many of the dead were found near emergency exits that had been chained shut to prevent guests from skipping out without paying, Interior Minister Snoh Thienthong said. The hotel had no sprinklers.