

Workplace Emergencies

Safety Training Program

Texas Department of Insurance
Division of Workers' Compensation
Workplace & Medical Services, Outreach & Education

HS93-26D (8-05)

Goal

The goal of this training program is to introduce planning and preparation procedures for emergencies in the workplace.

Objective

Employees will demonstrate knowledge of emergency response procedures.

Planning

The effectiveness of emergency response depends on the amount of planning and training performed. Management commitment is a key factor in determining the successful implementation of an emergency plan.

Employee involvement is another critical element of an emergency plan. A locally developed and comprehensive plan incorporates employee input to deal with all types of emergencies they might encounter in the workplace.

When an emergency plan is required by a particular Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standard, the plan must be in writing. Employers with 10 or fewer employees may communicate the plan orally to employees. The plan must include, as a minimum, the following:

1. emergency escape procedures and emergency escape route assignments
2. procedures to be followed by employees who remain to perform critical plant operations after emergency evacuation
3. procedures to account for all employees after emergency evacuation
4. rescue and medical duties for those employees who are to perform them
5. preferred means for reporting fires and other emergencies and
6. names or regular job titles of persons or departments to be contacted for further information or explanation of duties under the plan.

Potential emergencies in the workplace should be listed in an emergency action plan. The plan must list detailed procedures for employees who must provide essential plant operations until last minute evacuation becomes necessary.

For emergency evacuation, floor plans or workplace maps must be visibly posted and clearly show escape routes and refuge or safe areas. All employees must be informed of required actions to be taken in case of an emergency.



The plan must be presented to employees initially when it is developed and reviewed whenever the employees' responsibilities change or whenever the plan is changed. It is also a good idea to set up an annual review as a refresher for the employees. A copy should also be accessible to the employees for reference.

Chain of Command

To avoid confusion, a chain of command should be established detailing who has authority to make decisions during an emergency situation. An emergency response team is the first line of defense in emergencies. Duties of an Emergency Response Team Coordinator should include:

1. assessing the situation and determining whether an emergency exists that requires activating the emergency procedures
2. directing all response efforts, including evacuating personnel
3. ensuring outside emergency response is requested (i.e. fire departments and medical care) and
4. directing shutdown of plant operations if necessary

Communications

During an emergency, communication is critical. When the primary communications link is lost, an alternate method should be available to ensure a communication link exists with emergency response teams. This link then becomes the focal point for incoming and outgoing communications.

The emergency plan should specify how employees are to be notified so they can take proper action. Employees need

to be alerted to evacuation requirements or other actions as specified by the emergency plan. Alarms should be both audible and visible by all people throughout the facility. An auxiliary power supply should also be available. Emergency phone numbers should be posted on or near telephones, on bulletin boards and other conspicuous locations.

A key personnel list should also be available identifying personnel to notify during off-duty hours. This list should be updated periodically to ensure currency.

Accounting for Personnel

A responsible individual in the control center should be identified to account for personnel and inform police or Emergency Response Team members of persons believed missing.

Emergency Response Team

Depending on the size of the facility, there may be one or several teams trained in the following areas:

1. use of fire extinguishers
2. first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
3. shutdown procedures
4. evacuation procedures
5. chemical spill control procedures
6. use of self contained breathing apparatus (SCBA)
7. search and emergency rescue procedures
8. various firefighting techniques
9. trauma counseling

An important consideration is knowing when not to intervene (i.e. a fire has become too large for the team to handle alone).

Training

Training is a key element of an effective emergency response plan. All employees should be trained in the following:

1. evacuation plans
2. alarm systems
3. reporting procedures for personnel
4. shutdown procedures and
5. types of potential emergencies

Training programs should be provided:

1. initially when the plan is developed
2. for all new employees
3. when new equipment, materials or processes are introduced

4. when procedures have been updated or revised

5. when exercises show that employee performance must be improved and

6. at least annually

Annual random drills should be held for all personnel. The emergency plan itself should be reviewed at least every 12 months, and updated to maintain program efficiency.

Personal Protection

Personal protection is essential for any employee who may be exposed to potentially hazardous situations or conditions. During an emergency, response personnel may be exposed to a wide variety of hazardous situations including:

1. chemical splashes or contact with toxic materials
2. falling objects and flying particles
3. unknown atmospheres that may contain toxic gases, vapors, mists or inadequate oxygen
4. fires and electrical hazards and
5. violence in the workplace

Examples of safety equipment that may be used to protect response personnel are:

1. eye protection - safety glasses, goggles, or face shields
2. head and foot protection - hard hats and safety shoes
3. hand protection - gloves
4. breathing protection - proper respirators
5. hearing protection - earplugs and earmuffs
6. whole body protection for abnormal environmental conditions and chemical operations - chemical suits, gloves, hoods, boots, belts, harnesses and lifelines

The equipment selected must meet OSHA standards criteria.

Medical Assistance

If covered by OSHA reporting standards, an employer is required to have the following medical and first aid services:

1. In the absence of an infirmary, clinic or hospital nearby, a person or persons must be adequately trained to render first aid.
2. Eye washes or suitable equipment for quick drenching or flushing must be provided for employees who may be exposed to injurious corrosive materials. Employees must also be trained in how to use the equipment.
3. Medical personnel must be readily available for advice and consultation. This means only that medical assistance is available, not that health care must be provided.

If the employer is not covered by OSHA, the above guidelines are only recommended.

Security

Consideration should be given to providing security against unauthorized access to a hazardous situation and to protect vital records and equipment.

Review Questions

1. What is the key factor in determining the successful implementation of an emergency plan?
2. A plan may be communicated orally if the employer has _____ employees.
3. Random drills should be held at least _____ for all personnel.
4. Members of a response team should be able to provide trauma counseling. True or False
5. Training should be given to all employees at least _____.

Answers:

1. Management support
2. 10 or fewer
3. Annually
4. True
5. Annually

Resources

For more information on Workplace Emergencies, please consult *How to Prepare for Workplace Emergencies*, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, OSHA 3088, 2003 (Revised).

The Texas Department of Insurance (TDI), Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) Resource Center offers a workers' health and safety video tape library. Call (512) 804-4620 for more information or visit our web site at www.tdi.state.tx.us.

Disclaimer: Information contained in this training program is considered accurate at time of publication.

The Texas Department of Insurance (TDI),
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