

Emergency Action Plan Checklist

Have you taken a good look at your workplace emergency action plan lately? Maybe it's time for a review.

General Issues

Does your emergency action plan:

- Consider all potential natural or man-made emergencies that could disrupt your workplace?
- Consider all potential internal sources of emergencies that could disrupt your workplace?
- Consider the impact of these internal and external emergencies on the workplace's operations and is the response tailored to the workplace?
- Contain a list of key personnel with contact information as well as contact information for local emergency responders, agencies and contractors?
- Contain the names, titles, departments, and telephone numbers of individuals to contact for additional information or an explanation of duties and responsibilities under the plan?
- Address how rescue operations will be performed?
- Address how medical assistance will be provided?
- Identify how or where personal information on employees can be obtained in an emergency?

Evacuation Policy and Procedure

Does your emergency action plan:

- Identify the conditions under which an evacuation would be necessary?
- Identify a clear chain of command and designate a person authorized to order an evacuation or shutdown of operations?
- Address the types of actions expected of different employees for the various types of potential emergencies?
- Designate who, if anyone, will stay to shut down critical operations during an evacuation?
- Outline specific evacuation routes and exits and are these posted in the workplace where they are easily accessible to all employees?
- Address procedures for assisting people during evacuations, particularly those with disabilities or who do not speak English?
- Identify one or more assembly areas (as necessary for different types of emergencies) where employees will gather and a method for accounting for all employees?
- Address how visitors will be assisted in evacuation and accounted for?

Reporting Emergencies and Alerting Employees in an Emergency

Does your emergency action plan:

- Identify a preferred method for reporting fires and other emergencies?
- Describe the method to be used to alert employees, including disabled workers, to evacuate or take other action?

Employee Training and Drills

Does your emergency action plan:

- Identify how and when employees will be trained so that they understand the types of emergencies that may occur, their responsibilities and actions as outlined in the plan?
- Address how and when retraining will be conducted?
- Address if and how often drills will be conducted?

Train, Train, Train!

OSHA says that training in emergency procedures should be provided for all employees, including during orientation for new employees. Employees should be retrained:

- When your plan changes due to a change in the layout or design of the facility
- When new equipment, hazardous materials, or processes are introduced that affect evacuation routes
- When new types of hazards are introduced that require special actions

General training for your employees should address:

- Individual roles and responsibilities
- Threats, hazards, and protective actions
- Notification, warning, and communications procedures
- Emergency response procedures
- Evacuation, shelter, and accountability procedures
- Location and use of common emergency equipment
- Emergency shutdown procedures

You may also need to provide additional training to some employees (i.e. first-aid procedures, portable fire extinguisher use, etc.) depending on the responsibilities allocated employees in your plan.

Prepare Now, Recover Quicker

Among the emergencies your workplace emergency action plan must address are extreme weather events. These events run the gamut from hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, major rain and snowstorms, extended droughts leading to fire—the list is quite lengthy. Although each event has its own specific way of impacting your facility, the end result is very similar; your operations are severely impacted for some length of time, maybe even permanently.

Given the unpredictable and ferocious nature of weather, no one can fully predict or prepare for what may be in store, but you can prepare considerably so you're ready to effectively manage smaller extreme weather events and reasonably, and safely, handle larger events.

The real trick is sitting down ahead of time and developing an effective strategy to deal with the potential risks and exposures that could impact your organization. It requires effort, but if you are strategic, you can develop an emergency preparedness plan for extreme weather events that will weather the storm.