

## **Emergency Action Plans**

Employers will establish effective safety and health programs and prepare their workers to handle emergencies before they arise.

### **Planning**

Where required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), firms with more than 10 employees must have a written emergency action plan; smaller companies may communicate their plans orally. (See 29 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) Part 1910.38(a) for further information.) Essential to an effective emergency action plan are top management support and commitment and the involvement of all employees.

Management should review plans with employees initially and whenever the plan itself, or employees responsibilities under it, change. Plans should be re-evaluated and updated periodically. Emergency procedures, including the handling of any toxic chemicals, should include:

- Escape procedures and escape route assignments.
- Special procedures for employees who perform or shut down critical plant operations.
- A system to account for all employees after evacuation.
- Rescue and medical duties for employees who perform them.
- Means for reporting fires and other emergencies.
- Contacts for information about the plan.

### **Chain of Command**

An emergency response coordinator and a back-up coordinator must be designated. The coordinator may be responsible for operations, public information and ensuring that outside aid is called in. A back-up coordinator ensures that a trained person is always available. Duties of the coordinator include:

- Determining what an emergencies may occur and seeing that emergency procedures are developed to address them.
- Directing all emergency activities including evacuation of personnel.
- Ensuring that outside emergency services such as medical aid and fire departments are called when necessary.
- Directing the shutdown of plant operations when necessary.

## Emergency Response Teams

Members of emergency response teams should be thoroughly trained for potential emergencies and physically capable of carrying out their duties; know about toxic hazards in the workplace and be able to judge when to evacuate personnel or depend on outside help (e.g. when a fire is too large for them to handle). One or more teams must be trained in:

- Use of various types of fire extinguishers.
- First aid, including cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- The requirements of the OSHA bloodborne pathogens standard.
- Shutdown procedures.
- Chemical spill control procedures.
- Use of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA).
- Search and emergency rescue procedures.
- Hazardous materials emergency response in accordance with 28 CFR 1910.120.

## Response Activities

Effective emergency communication is vital. An alternate area for a communications center other than management offices should be established in the plans and the emergency response coordinator should operate from this center. Management should provide emergency alarms and ensure that employees know how to report emergencies. An updated list of key personnel and off-duty telephone numbers should be maintained.

A system should be established for accounting for personnel once workers have been evacuated with a person in the control center responsible for notifying police or emergency response team members of persons believed missing.

Effective security procedures, such as cordoned off areas, can prevent unauthorized access and protect vital records and equipment. Duplicate records can be kept in off-site locations for essential accounting files, legal documents and lists of employees relatives to be notified in case of emergency.

## Training

Every employee needs to know details of the emergency action plan, including evacuation plans, alarm systems, reporting procedures for personnel, shutdown procedures, and types of potential emergencies. Drills should be held at random intervals, at least annually, and include, if possible, outside Law enforcement and fire authorities.

Training must be conducted initially, when new employees are hired, and at least annually. Additional training is needed when new equipment, materials, or processes

are introduced, when procedures have been updated or revised, or when exercises show that employee performance is inadequate.

### **Personal Protection**

Employees exposed to accidental chemical splashes, falling objects, flying particles, unknown atmospheres with inadequate oxygen or toxic gases, fires, live electrical wiring, or similar emergencies need personal protective equipment, including:

- Safety glasses, goggles, or face shields for eye protection.
- Hard hats and safety shoes.
- Properly selected and fitted respirators.
- Whole body coverings, gloves, hoods, and boots.
- Body protection for abnormal environmental conditions such as extreme temperatures.

### **Medical Assistance**

Employers not near an infirmary, clinic, or hospital should have someone on-site trained in first aid, have medical personnel readily available for advice and consultation, and develop written emergency medical procedures.

It is essential that first aid supplies are available to the trained medical personnel, that emergency phone numbers are placed in conspicuous places near or on telephones, and prearranged ambulance services for any emergency are available.