Responding to an Emergency Meeting Kit

Unexpected emergencies occur every day in many facilities, including laboratories, offices, and residential buildings. It might be a fire, flood, earthquake, shooting, tornado, or hazardous chemical spill. If you don’t know what to do during an emergency the odds increase that you or others around you will be injured or killed.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

The best way to protect yourself, your employees and your business is to prepare for an emergency before it happens through an Emergency Action Plan.

An Emergency Action Plan Must Include the Following:

- A preferred method for reporting fires and other emergencies.
- An evacuation policy and procedure.
- Emergency escape procedures and route assignments, such as floor plans, workplace maps, and safe or refuge areas.
- Names, titles, departments, and telephone numbers of individuals both within and outside your company to contact for additional information or explanation of duties and responsibilities under the emergency plan.
- Procedures for employees who remain to perform or shut down critical plant operations, operate fire extinguishers, or perform other essential services that cannot be shut down for every emergency alarm before evacuating.
- Rescue and medical duties for any workers designated to perform them.
- The site of an alternative communications center to be used in the event of a fire or explosion

ROLE OF EMPLOYEES

The best emergency action plans include employees in the planning process, specify what employees should do during an emergency, and ensure that employees receive proper training for emergencies. When you include your employees in your planning, encourage them to offer suggestions about potential hazards, worst-case scenarios, and proper emergency responses. After you develop the plan, review it with your employees to make sure everyone knows what to do before, during and after an emergency.

TRAIN EMPLOYEES

Identify and address the following:

- Individual roles and responsibilities.
- Threats, hazards, and protective actions.

- Notification, warning, and communications procedures.
- Means for locating family members in an emergency.
- Emergency response procedures.
- Evacuation, shelter, and accountability procedures.
- Location and use of common emergency equipment; and
- Emergency shutdown procedures.

PRACTICE DRILLS/ TRAINING FREQUENCY

Once you have reviewed your emergency action plan with your employees and everyone has had the proper training, it is a good idea to hold practice drills as often as necessary to keep employees prepared.

Offer training when you do the following:

- Develop your initial plan.
- Hire new employees.
- Introduce new equipment, materials, or processes into the workplace that affect evacuation routes.
- Change the layout or design of the facility, and,
- Revise or update your emergency procedures.

EVACUATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

When developing your emergency action plan, it is important to determine the following:

- Conditions under which an evacuation would be necessary.
- A clear chain of command and designation of the person in your business authorized to order an evacuation or shutdown.
- Specific evacuation procedures, including routes and exits.
- Procedures for assisting people with disabilities or who do not speak English.
- Designation of what, if any, employees will continue or shut down critical operations during an evacuation.
- A system for accounting for personnel following an evacuation.

ACCOUNT FOR EMPLOYEES AFTER EVACUATION

Accounting for all employees following an evacuation is critical. Confusion in the assembly areas can lead to delays in rescuing anyone trapped in the building, or unnecessary and dangerous search-and-rescue operations.

- Designate assembly areas where employees should gather after evacuating.
- Take a head count after the evacuation.
- Establish a method for accounting for non-employees such as suppliers and customers; and
- Establish procedures for further evacuation in case the incident expands. This may consist of sending employees home by normal means or providing them with transportation to an offsite location.

FINAL WORD

A call for help to emergency services that provides accurate and critical information will help ensure the right personnel and equipment are sent. Taking the correct action can potentially reduce harm to humans and help stop further damage.