

Emergency Protocols in the Workplace

Introduction:

Emergencies can happen at any time. A workplace emergency is an unforeseen incident that threatens the company, employees, customers, or the public. These incidents may include floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, fires, chemical spills or releases, explosions, or violence resulting in injury or death. The normal operations of the business are disrupted or shut down.

Discussion Points:

- How good is your Emergency Response Plan?
- All employees should know the procedures to follow in emergencies;
- Where are emergency supplies located?
- What is the escape route?
- Know where to meet after an evacuation



Discussion:

A disorganized evacuation during an emergency may cause confusion leading to property damage and injury. To avoid this, the company should have an emergency response plan and train workers before beginning any job task. Commitment from the management and participation from the workers is essential to establishing an effective emergency plan.

When establishing an emergency response plan, determine who will be designated as the person authorized to shut down production and to assist co-workers in an evacuation; A specific evacuation procedure should be documented and posted where all employees will have access to it.

In extreme emergencies, local emergency officials may order evacuation from the premises. It's important to have a notification process to receive messages and have a procedure ready to implement without hesitation. If your company has specific areas of operation under a required permit, the evacuation process should include procedures that specifically address entry into the permit-restricted areas. These procedures should follow recommended guidelines of OSHA and NIOSH. OSHA requirements for emergencies can be found in 29 CFR 1910 of the General Industry Occupational Safety and Health Standards.

OSHA provides references and services to help employers and employees improve workplace health and safety and comply with regulatory requirements. This includes education and training opportunities, publications, electronic services, free onsite consultation services, and participation in the Voluntary Protection Programs. To seek OSHA advice, assistance, or products; to report an emergency; or to file a complaint, call 1-800-321-OSHA, contact your nearest regional office, or go to their website at www.osha.gov/.

As always, stay safe out there!



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