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A FAIRFAX COMPANY

RISK ENGINEERING



EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

An emergency action plan (EAP) is a written document required by OSHA standard 29 CFR 1910.38(a). An EAP facilitates and organizes employer and employee actions during workplace emergencies.

But drafting an EAP is not enough to ensure the safety of your employees. When an evacuation is necessary, responsible, trained individuals are needed who can supervise and coordinate activities and ensure that it is safe and successful.

According to the standard, if a company employs fewer than eleven people, the program does not have to be in written form; however, many building owners require a written emergency action plan, regardless of company size or applicability of OSHA standards.

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Action Plan Elements

OSHA requires that the information listed below be included in an action plan. Some of the elements can be generic while others are site specific:

- Procedures for reporting a fire or other emergency.
 - Other emergencies may include explosions, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, toxic material releases, radiological and biological accidents, civil disturbances, terrorist attacks, and even workplace violence.
- Evacuations outside the facility can be ordered for emergencies, such as:
 - Fire
 - Explosion
 - Hazardous materials spill
 - Structural damage (e.g. roof collapse)
 - Terrorism and sabotage
 - Flood
- Evacuations may be required for employees to remain inside the facility such as:
 - Earthquake
 - Storms
 - Ice storms
 - Snow
 - Thunderstorms
 - Tornadoes
- Evaluate each type of emergency to determine the best course of action to protect employees and visitors.
- Emergency evacuation plans must include escape procedures and escape route assignments.
 - The plan should include primary and secondary escape routes and exits.
 - Development of a floor diagram should be included in this part of the EAP. Clearly mark the locations of exits, assembly points, and equipment (such as fire extinguishers, first aid kits and spill kits).



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(continued)

- They must also define procedures to be followed by employees who remain to operate critical plant operations:
 - If any employees are to stay behind, the plan must describe in detail the procedures to be followed by these employees. All employees remaining behind must be capable of recognizing when to abandon the operation and evacuate before their egress path is blocked. In small establishments it is common to include in the plan locations where the utilities (such as electrical and gas) can be shut down for all or part of the facility, either by employees or by emergency response personnel.
- Procedures must describe a way to account for all employees after an emergency evacuation has been completed.
 - It is a good idea to maintain a visitor log for guests and contractors to sign. The visitor log should be obtained, if circumstances permit, prior to evacuating so that it is later possible to account for all the visitors who have signed in.
- Delineate rescue and medical duties for those employees who are to perform them.
- Describe the preferred means of reporting fires and other emergencies (i.e. by air horn or voice).
- List names or regular job titles of people or departments who can be contacted for further information or explanation of duties under the plan.

Alarm System

- The premises alarm system must be loud enough to be understood as an alarm above surrounding noise conditions.
- It must be distinctive enough to result in evacuation.
- If electronic equipment is used, it must be tested periodically for reliability.
- A verbal alarm may be used if there are less than eleven employees on the site.

Training

A company should present its emergency action plan to employees as soon as it is completed and, thereafter, when designated actions or employee responsibilities change or the plan changes. It is a good idea to hold practice evacuation drills. Evacuation drills permit employees to become familiar with the emergency procedures, their egress routes, and assembly locations, so that if an actual emergency should occur, they will respond properly.

Drills should be conducted as often as necessary to keep employees prepared. Include outside resources, such as fire and police departments, when possible. After each drill, gather management and employees to evaluate the effectiveness of the drill. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of your plan and work to improve it.

Changes and Updates to the Plan

Operations and personnel change frequently, and an outdated plan will be of little use in an emergency. You should review the contents of your plan regularly and update it whenever an employee's emergency actions or responsibilities change, or when there is a change in the layout or design of the facility, new equipment, hazardous materials, or processes are introduced that affect evacuation routes, or new types of hazards are introduced that require special actions. The most common outdated items in plans are the facility and agency contact information. Consider placing this important information on a separate page in the front of the printed plan so that it can be readily updated.

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Conclusion

Don't wait for an emergency to determine what to do. A well thought out, practiced, and executed plan will generally save more lives and avoid injury. If you need assistance in developing a plan for your company, you can go to Crum & Forster's website at www.cfins.com for a sample plan or go to OSHA's website for an online tool to help guide you through the development of an emergency action plan. Here is OSHA's link:

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/expertsystem/default.htm>

Additional Resources

How to Plan for Workplace Emergencies and Evacuations
U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration,
OSHA 3088, 2001 (Revised)

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3088.pdf>

Fight or Flee?

https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/portable_relation.html#risk_table

Determining means of egress

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/egress.html>

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