First Aid Program Elements: Workplan



A first aid program is required for most employers in the U.S. and Canada. The program should be based on the hazards, risks, and proximity to medical services of an individual site, however there are several elements that every program should include.

Step 1: Perform a Risk Assessment

- Identify number of worksites
    - First aid coverage must be based on the total workforce present at each location.
    - If you have multiple sites – temporary or permanent – an assessment must be done on each.
    - Don’t forget to include all shifts as well. First aid must be available to employees regardless of the shift they are working.
- What conditions and processes could cause injury or illness?
    - Confined spaces
    - Electrical work
    - Workplace violence
    - Underwater work
    - Trench and excavation work
- What types of injuries and illnesses are likely to occur and what is their potential severity?
    - Sudden cardiac arrest
    - Severe bleeding
    - Head trauma
    - Asphyxiation
    - Amputation

Step 2: Determine Emergency Response Times

- Work with local police and emergency services to determine approximate response times for:
    - All permanent and temporary locations.
    - All times of the day and night when workers are on duty.
- A three-four-minute response time is ideal but is not always possible, which is why it is recommended, and in some cases required, that employees trained as first responders/first aid attendants are on site.

Step 3: Have First Aid and Emergency Supplies Readily Available

- The type and amount of supplies will depend on:

    - Physical size and number of people at each location.
    - Types of injuries and illnesses that could reasonably be expected to occur.
    - If exposure to blood and body fluids is a possibility. If it is, PPE must be provided to protect first responders from exposure.

Step 4: Written Policy

- It is advisable, and in some cases required, to put first aid program policies and procedures in writing.
- Policies and procedures should be communicated to all employees, including those workers who may not read or speak English. Language barriers should be addressed:
    - In instructing employees on first-aid policies and procedures.
    - When designating individuals who will receive first-aid training and become the on-site first-aid providers.

Step 5: Program Training and Review

- Emergency drills should be held at least once a year to test:
    - Worker awareness of how to call for first aid and generally what to do in an emergency.
    - How well the emergency communication system works.
    - How well your first responders/first aid attendants respond.
- Review the program and written policy annually and whenever changes to either occur.
- Train first responders based on regulatory requirements and as needed. Since retraining for first aid and CPR training may only be required every 1-3 years it’s a good idea to have periodic refresher sessions.