Workplan: Emergency Planning and Response



Fire, natural disaster, and other emergencies can strike your workplace without warning. While you can't predict them, you can prepare for them and preparedness save lives, prevent injuries; and limits property damage. If that's not motivation enough, being prepared for workplace emergencies may save your business thousands and even hundreds of thousands in safety fines avoided.

This Workplan sets out a four-step strategy you can implement over a 30-day period (and beyond) to help ready your workplace and your workforce for an emergency.

Step One: Conduct Hazard or Vulnerability Assessment (Day 1-5)

The primary hazards in an emergency such as a fire, chemical release, serious machine malfunction, workplace violence, or natural disaster are often only the beginning of the damage and destruction. You also must think about the secondary hazards that occur because of the initial event. A hazard assessment will shed light on all these possible hazards. Once identified you can prepare your response.

Implementation Strategy: If an EAP is required, the first step in developing it is to perform a hazard assessment to determine which physical or chemical hazards in your workplace could cause an emergency.

Step Two: Identification of Emergency Control Procedures and Written EAP (Day 6-15)

The next step is to use the findings of your hazard assessment to develop a written Emergency Action Plan (EAP). The EAP cannot be one-size-fits-all; each workplace must have its own EAP based on an assessment of its unique hazards and circumstances. The plan must include:

1. All possible emergencies, consequences, required actions, written procedures, and available resources.
2. A detailed list of personnel to contact in an emergency and their role in an emergency.
3. A list of external organizations to contact such as fire, rescue, and ambulance services; hospitals, police department and any government agencies; utility companies; and any industries in nearby that should be informed because of a potential safety risk to their workers and their operations.
4. Floor plans and large-scale maps showing excavation routes, emergency equipment, hazardous areas (i.e. chemical storage), as well as gas and water lines and other information as required by applicable safety regulations.

Implementation Strategy: An EAP should include personnel assignment, evacuation

procedures, alarm and notification systems, and PPE/protective clothing.

1. Personnel Assignments: The EAP should establish a clear chain of command in which all personnel have clearly assigned roles in the event of an evacuation. The EAP should designate:

- A leader with authority to order an evacuation or shutdown.
- An appropriate number of evacuation wardens to help with the evacuation and ensure that everybody is accounted for before evacuating themselves.
- Individuals to remain behind to carry out or close-down vital plant operations before evacuating themselves.
- Individuals authorized to perform rescue or medical duties in the event of an evacuation.

The EAP must also list the name or job title of every employee who may be contacted by employees who need more information about the EAP or an explanation of their duties under it.

2. Evacuation Procedures: At a minimum, the EAP must incorporate the following procedures:

- Procedures for reporting fires and other emergencies.
- Emergency evacuation procedures, including evacuation type and identification of exit routes.
- Procedures to help disabled employees that require assistance to evacuate.
- Procedures for the employees who remain behind to operate critical plant operations before evacuating themselves.
- Procedures to account for all employees after evacuation.
- Procedures for the employees performing rescue or medical duties.

3. Alarm & Notification Systems: There are also certain engineering controls you must implement as part of the EAP, including:

- An alarm system that uses a distinctive signal that all employees recognize to communicate orders to evacuate or perform other actions under the EAP.
- A public address or other emergency communications system that’s available to use to notify employees of the emergency and contact local fire, police and other emergency respondents.
- An auxiliary power supply in case electricity is shut off.

4. PPE & Protective Clothing: Workers counted on to extinguish fires or who are otherwise exposed to risk of fire and explosion must be equipped with and use appropriate PPE and protective clothing. Workers who perform interior structural firefighting operations must be furnished, at no cost to themselves:

- Foot and leg protection;
- Protective footwear;
- Body protection;
- Gloves or glove systems;
- Head, eye and face protection; and
- Respiratory protective equipment.

Step Three: Training and Education (Day 16-20)

Workers must receive training and education needed to carry out their roles under the EAP (even if the role is to evacuate or shelter-in-place) and help in the safe and orderly evacuation of other workers.

Other items to educate workers on include:

- Threats, hazards and protective actions.
- Notification, communication and warning procedures.
- Means of locating family members in an emergency.
- Emergency response procedures.
- Evacuation, shelter and accountability procedures.
- Location and use of emergency equipment.
- Procedures for emergency shutdown.

Employees designated to use firefighting equipment under the EAP must also be trained in the appropriate use of the equipment upon initial assignment of that responsibility and at least once a year after that.

Implementation Strategy: Use training programs and resources (such as those provided by SafetyNow and SafeSupervisor), deliver effective and legally compliant fire and emergency response training.

Keep in mind that simply providing training isn't enough. You must ensure workers understand and can apply their training on the job. Methods of verifying the effectiveness of training include:

- Quizzing workers on the lesson after you deliver it.
- Making workers demonstrate the procedures covered during the training.
- Making workers demonstrate proper use of the PPE covered during the training.
- Staging evacuation drills to verify that workers can carry out the EAP and evacuate safely in the event of a fire or other emergency.

Step Four: Inspect, Monitor, Reinforce, and Improve (Day 21-30 and forever after)

You must review the EAP with each worker the plan covers when:

- The EAP is first developed or the worker is first assigned to carry out a responsibility under the plan;
- The worker's responsibilities under the EAP change; and
- Changes are made to the EAP itself.

The final step is to monitor your EAP. Monitoring must be carried out on an ongoing and continuous basis. So even though we "schedule" it as starting on Day 21 and ending on Day 30, the monitoring process never ends. Monitoring should be done on a regular basis, e.g., fire inspections should be part of monthly work inspections and scheduled safety audits, and in response to red flags like:

- Worker complaints.
- Incident and injuries.
- Significant changes to operations, equipment, personnel etc. that weren't accounted for or anticipated in the previous hazard assessment.