

During an Earthquake Meeting Kit

EARTHQUAKE READINESS

There are events or occurrences that no man or scientific device can ever predict. One of these fortuitous events is an earthquake. It is a sudden, rapid shaking of the ground caused by the breaking and shifting of rock beneath the Earth's surface. The shaking can result in damage to buildings and bridges, disruption of phone service and it trigger other forms of destruction such as landslides, avalanches, flash floods, fires, and ocean waves.

EMPLOYEES NEED TO DROP, COVER AND HOLD ON DURING AN EARTHQUAKE

- **DROP** to the hands and knees.
- **COVER** the head and neck with one arm and hand. If possible, crawl under a nearby table or desk, or next to an interior wall away from windows.
- **HOLD ON** to the table or desk with one hand until the shaking stops.

For those using a wheelchair: lock the device, lean forward and cover your head, then hold on. If you use a walker with a seating pad, you'll also need to lock the device, then sit down on the seating pad, and cover your head.

EARTHQUAKE PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE IN THE WORKPLACE – DEVELOP EMERGENCY PLAN

An emergency action plan is critical. An emergency action plan checklist can assist this process.

When to Evacuate:

- If emergency response authorities indicate specifically to do so.
- If emergency response authorities indicate there is time to do so.
- If you can reach a safe location before an event is expected to occur.
- When environmental conditions would not expose evacuees to a dangerous environment.

Evacuation Plans Should Include:

- Conditions under which evacuation would be necessary (considering the above information);
- When sheltering in place may be a better alternative;
- A clear chain of command and designation of the person in workplace authorized to order an evacuation;
- Specific evacuation procedures, including routes and exits;
- Specific procedures for employers and workers in high-rise buildings (if applicable);
- Procedures for assisting visitors and workers in evacuating, particularly those with disabilities or who do not speak English;
- Designation of which, if any, workers will remain after an evacuation alarm to shutdown critical operations or perform other duties before evacuating; and
- Special equipment for workers, including personal protective equipment and respiratory protection (e.g., escape respirators), if needed.

HOW TO PREPARE THE WORKPLACE BEFORE AN EARTHQUAKE OCCURS

Here are some things to prepare the workplace before an earthquake occurs:

- **Pick “safe places”.** A safe place could be under a sturdy table or desk or against an interior wall away from windows,

bookcases or tall furniture that could fall on you. The shorter the distance to move to safety, the less likely that you will be injured.

- **Practice drop, cover, and hold-on in each safe place.** Drop under a sturdy desk or table and hold on to one leg of the table or desk. Protect your eyes by keeping your head down. Practice these actions so that they become an automatic response.
- **Practice these safe earthquake procedures** (i.e., drop, cover, and hold-on) at least twice a year. Frequent practice will help reinforce safe behavior. When an earthquake or other disaster occurs, many people hesitate, trying to remember what they are supposed to do.
- **Eliminate Potential Hazards.** It is important for employers to conduct a thorough survey of the workplace. They should be able to identify harmful objects and eliminate them. Secure all cabinets, shelves, and heavy equipment that could tip over during an earthquake. Storing heavy items on top of shelves is also not a good idea as it might fall on someone. Also, avoid placing items that might fall into aisles or hallways that are part of the evacuation routes. As much as possible, arrange your workspaces in a way that when cubicle partitions fall, it would not trap an employee. Make sure that all exits are marked visibly that employees can be able to go out.
- **Appoint an Emergency Team.** Supervisors should brief employees on the emergency plan when an earthquake occurs. The discussion should cover evacuation procedures, communication techniques, and emergency contacts. An emergency team should also be formed that would lead and execute the emergency plan. This emergency team should take a first-aid class from organizations such as the American Red Cross and American Heart Association.
- **Stock up Emergency Supplies.** It is crucial to have emergency supplies ready and stored in an accessible place. Supplies should include medical kit, flashlights, battery-powered radio, towels, garbage bags, dust masks, can opener, and a

whistle. Have 3-days worth of non-perishable food such as canned goods, crackers, granola bars, and water.

FINAL WORD

Safety training for employees in natural disasters like earthquakes also prepares employees for all kinds of emergencies that could and have occurred in workplaces. After disaster occurs with loss of life and property the issues of training and preparedness always takes center stage in the post – mortem analysis.