Emergency Planning Meeting Kit

What’s At Stake

EMERGENCY PLANNING

Emergency planning is the course of action a company takes in order to minimise the effects of an incident or crisis. The main objective of emergency planning is to reduce injuries, protect the community and maintain business continuity.

What’s the Danger

VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

The first step is to identify which hazards pose a threat to your organization. Since major emergencies are rare events, records of past incidents and occupational experience are not the only source of valuable information. Knowledge of both technological (chemical or physical) and natural hazards can be broadened by consulting with similar organizations, fire departments, insurance companies, engineering consultants, and government departments.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

EVENTS OR DECISIONS TO CONSIDER

Having identified the hazards, the possible major impacts of each should be itemized, such as:

- Sequential events.
- Evacuation.
- Casualties.
- Damage to plant infrastructure.
- Loss of vital records/documents.
- Damage to equipment.
- Disruption of work.

Based on these events, the required actions are determined.

- Declare emergency.
- Sound the alert.
- Evacuate danger zone.
- Close main shutoffs.
- Call for external aid.
- Initiate rescue operations.
- Tend to casualties.
- Fight fire

THE EMERGENCY PLAN – THE CORE:

1. All possible emergencies, consequences, required actions, written procedures, and the resources available.
2. Detailed lists of emergency response personnel including their cell phone numbers, alternate contact details, and their duties and responsibilities.
3. Floor plans.
4. Large scale maps showing evacuation routes and service conduits (such as gas and water lines).

Since a sizable document will likely result, the plan should provide staff members with separate written instructions about their particular emergency response duties.

Areas where flammables, explosives, or chemicals are used or stored should be considered as the most likely place for a technological hazard emergency to occur.

The risk from natural hazards would include:

- Floods.
- Earthquakes.
- Tornadoes.
- Severe windstorms.
- Snow or ice storms.
- Severe extremes in temperature (cold or hot).
- Pandemic diseases like influenza.

The possibility of one event triggering others must be considered.

An explosion may start a fire and cause structural failure while an earthquake might initiate many of the technological events listed above.

Testing, Training and Revision

Completing a comprehensive plan for handling emergencies is a major step toward preventing disasters. However, it is difficult to predict all of the problems that may happen unless the plan is tested. Exercises and drills may be conducted to practice all or critical portions (such as evacuation) of the plan. A thorough and immediate review after each exercise, drill, or after an actual emergency will point out areas that require improvement. Knowledge of individual responsibilities can be evaluated through paper tests or interviews.

The plan should be revised when shortcomings have become known, and should be reviewed at least annually. Changes in plant infrastructure, processes, materials used, and key personnel are occasions for updating the plan.

It should be stressed that provision must be made for the training of both individuals and teams, if they are expected to perform adequately in an emergency. An annual full-scale exercise will help in maintaining a high level of proficiency.

FINAL WORD

No one is immune either at home or work from being affected by an emergency. The only antidote is preparing for the emergency. Preparing means knowing and appreciating all the risks at home and at work and then developing an emergency plan.