Emergency Preparedness Safety Talk

WHAT’S AT STAKE?

Emergencies can create a variety of hazards for workers in the impacted area. Preparing before an emergency incident plays a vital role in ensuring that employers and workers have the necessary equipment, know where to go, and know how to keep themselves safe when an emergency occurs.

The more you are prepared for them, the better you will be able to act, minimizing panic and confusion when an emergency occurs.

WHAT’S THE DANGER?

Emergencies occur every day in many facilities, including laboratories, offices, and residential buildings. It might be a fire, flood, earthquake, shooting, tornado, or hazardous chemical spill. If you don’t know what to do during an emergency the odds increase that you or others around you will be injured or killed.

EMERGENCIES

- Severe weather, such as heavy wind, flooding, tornados, or hurricanes
- Utility outages
- Fires
- Explosions
- Widespread infection
- Hazardous materials
- Earthquakes
- Workplace violence
- Terrorism

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

An emergency plan needs to be well-thought out. It needs to be easily accessible. Though logic says it has to be through and well vetted, it is more important for workers to know about is in it, does it really describe the methods to respond to the emergency event!!! A better fit is to have a appendix or supplement to enable workers to know the emergency and what to do in emergency. Small “flipcharts” or spiral-bound, hand-size, notepad-type inserts that outline each potential risk or emergency, and then show who to call, with numbers and what occupants should do for their own safety and safety of others.

Confusion and uncertainty reign in an emergency. This happens from not knowing **how** to react or not **recognizing** the potential for danger.

Knowing and **practicing** what to do before an emergency occurs is a key step to protecting yourself and others around you. In addition to participating in emergency drills held by your employer, take time to see how the following questions are answered.

WHO

- Who are the qualified first aid personnel for your facility?
- Who on your crew knows CPR?
- Who in your area is trained to clean up a chemical spill?

WHAT

- What factors determine when you evacuate and when you shelter-in-place? Fire and explosions are examples of when to evacuate. You may be told to shelter-in-place during an earthquake, severe weather, or radiological, biological, or chemical release.
- What are the emergency exit routes from your work area? There must be at least two – and more than two are required if the number of employees, size of the building, or how the workplace is arranged will not allow for safe evacuation.
- What phone numbers do you call for various emergency agencies?

- What is the physical address of your work location?
- What are your duties in an emergency?
- What should an emergency kit contain? Do you have one in your car or at work?

WHERE

- Where should you assemble outdoors if you must evacuate?
- Where should you shelter-in-place if necessary?
- Where is the first aid equipment located?
- Where are the nearest telephones in your work area?
- Where is the fire extinguisher located? Do you know how to use it? If not, where and how will you get training?
- Where are the safety showers and eyewash stations in this work area? Do you know how to operate them?
- Where are the SDSs (Safety Data Sheets) for the chemicals used in your work area?

HOW

- How do you activate the alarm for a fire? For any other kind of emergency?
- How do you contact the fire department or a facility fire brigade?
- How would you give directions to an ambulance or other emergency service to reach your area?

OVERVIEW

The **WHO, WHAT, WHERE, AND HOW** answer will enable people to get a firm grasp of knowing and what to do in the event of an emergency in the workplace.

It is seemingly simplistic but it answers all the questions that likely will arise in an emergency situation

FINAL WORD

Remember, if you wait for an emergency to learn how to protect yourself, it’s likely already too late. Talk to your supervisor or

floor warden to clear up any questions you have with respect to an evacuation due to an emergency of any kind.