

EMERGENCY PLANNING

ADVICE FOR IMPLEMENTERS

What is a workplace emergency?

A workplace emergency is an unforeseen situation that threatens your employees, contractors, or the public; disrupts or shuts down your operations; or causes physical or environmental damage. Emergencies may be natural or manmade and include the following:

- » Floods
- » Tornadoes
- » Fires
- » Toxic gas releases
- » Chemical spills
- » Explosions

How do you protect yourself, your employees, and your operations?

The best way is to prepare to respond to an emergency before it happens. Few people can think clearly and logically in a crisis, so it is important to do so in advance, when you have time to be thorough. Brainstorm the worst-case scenarios. Ask yourself what you would do if the worst happened. What if a fire broke out on the well? Or someone gets knocked down by H₂S? Or Frac line fails spraying high pressure well treatment chemicals over workers and equipment? Once you have identified potential emergencies, consider how they would affect you and your workers and how you would respond.

What is an emergency response plan?

An emergency response plan covers designated actions employers and workers must take to ensure employee safety from fire and other emergencies.

What should your emergency response plan include?

- » A list of potential emergencies and the alarm and emergency communication requirements.
- » Location and operational procedures for emergency equipment and facilities.
- » Emergency response training requirements.
- » Fire protection requirements.
- » A preferred method for reporting fires and other emergencies.
- » An evacuation policy and procedure.
- » Emergency escape procedures and route assignments, such as floor plans, workplace maps, and safe or refuge areas.
- » Names, titles, departments, and telephone numbers of individuals both within and outside your company to contact for additional information or explanation of duties and responsibilities under the emergency plan.
- » Procedures for employees who remain to perform or shut down critical operations, operate fire extinguishers, or perform other essential services that cannot be shut down for every emergency alarm before evacuating.
- » Rescue procedures and first aid duties/services for any workers designated to perform them.
- » Designated assembly locations and procedures to account for all employees after an evacuation.
- » The site of an alternative communications center to be used in the event of a fire or explosion.

How do you alert employees to an emergency?

- » Make sure alarms are distinctive and recognized by all employees as a signal to evacuate the work area or perform actions identified in your plan.
- » Make available an emergency communications system such as a public address system, portable radio unit, or other means to notify employees of the emergency and to contact local law enforcement, the fire department, and others.
- » Stipulate that alarms must be able to be heard, seen, or otherwise perceived by everyone in the workplace. Consider providing an auxiliary power supply in the event that electricity is shut off.

How do you develop an evacuation policy and procedures?

A disorganized evacuation can result in confusion, injury, and property damage. That is why when developing your emergency response plan it is important to determine the following:

- » Conditions under which an evacuation would be necessary;
- » A clear chain of command and designation of the person in your operation authorized to order an evacuation or shutdown. You may want to designate an “evacuation warden” to assist others in an evacuation and to account for personnel;
- » Specific evacuation procedures, including routes and exits. Post these procedures where they are easily accessible to all employees;
- » Procedures for assisting people with injuries or who do not speak English;
- » Designation of what, if any, employees will continue or shut down critical operations during an evacuation. These people must be capable of recognizing when to abandon the operation and evacuate themselves; and
- » A system for accounting for personnel following an evacuation.

How should you plan for rescue operations?

It takes more than just willing hands to save lives. Untrained individuals may endanger themselves and those they are trying to rescue.

- » Leave rescue work to those who are trained, equipped, and certified to conduct rescues.
- » Designate workers who will be responsible for rescue and evacuation.
- » Ensure the availability of rescue and personal protective equipment for designated workers.
- » Provide training to designated workers and conduct rescue and evacuation drills to make sure procedures work and that the training is effective.
- » What first aid services should you provide during an emergency?

Occupational health and safety legislation requires all oil and gas sites with workers present to have some trained first aiders and equipment. If your work site is close to municipal 911 emergency services this may be all that is required. However if you are distant from 911 services your emergency response plan should also include:

- » Methods to transport injured workers; and
- » The need for supplemental first aid training and equipment.

What does your plan need to include about hazardous substances?

WHMIS regulations requires employers who use hazardous chemicals to inventory them, keep the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) for them in a place accessible to workers, label containers of these chemicals with their hazards, and train employees in ways to protect themselves against those hazards. A good way to start is to determine from your hazardous chemical inventory what hazardous chemicals you use and to gather the MSDSs for the chemicals. MSDSs describe the hazards that a chemical may present, list the precautions to take when handling, storing, or using the substance, and outline emergency and first-aid procedures.

QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ANSWER

- How well prepared is your work place now?
- What potential emergency situations could occur?
- What procedures do you already have in place?
- Do workers know what to do if an emergency occurs?