Evacuation Plans

Protecting the lives of everyone within your facility is the first priority in the event of an emergency. One common means of protection is evacuation. In the case of fire, an immediate evacuation to a predetermined area away from your facility may be necessary.

To develop an evacuation policy and procedure:

- Determine the conditions under which an evacuation would be necessary.
- Establish a clear chain of command. Identify personnel with the authority to order an evacuation. Designate "evacuation wardens" to assist others in an evacuation and to account for personnel.
- Establish specific evacuation procedures.
- Establish a system for accounting for personnel. Consider employees' transportation needs for community-wide evacuations.
- Establish procedures for assisting personnel with disabilities and those who do not speak English. Post evacuation procedures.
- Designate personnel to continue or shut down critical operations while an evacuation is underway. They must be capable of recognizing when to abandon the operation and evacuate themselves.
- Coordinate plans with your local emergency management office.

Evacuation routes and exits

Designate primary and secondary evacuation routes and exits.

- Make sure routes and exits are clearly marked and well lit.
- Post signs.
- Install emergency lighting in case a power outage occurs during an evacuation.

Ensure evacuation routes and emergency exits are:

- Wide enough to accommodate the number of evacuating personnel.
- Clear and unobstructed at all times.
- Unlikely to expose evacuating personnel to additional hazards.Have evacuation routes evaluated by someone not in your organization.

Assembly areas and accountability

Accurately accounting for personnel after a site evacuation requires planning and practice.

- Designate assembly areas where personnel should gather after evacuating.
- Take a head count after the evacuation. Determine the names and last known locations of personnel not accounted for and give them to your Emergency Operations Center. (Confusion in the assembly areas can lead to unnecessary and dangerous search and rescue operations).

- Establish a method for accounting for non-employees such as suppliers and customers.
- Establish procedures for further evacuation in case the incident expands. This may involve sending employees home by normal means or providing them with transportation to an off-site location.

Training and information

Train your employees in evacuation.

- Conduct sessions at least annually or when:
  - New employees are hired.
  - Evacuation wardens, shelter managers, and others with special assignments are designated.
  - New equipment, materials, or processes are introduced.
  - Procedures are revised.
  - Exercises show that employee performance must be improved.
- Provide emergency information such as checklists and evacuation maps.
- Post evacuation maps in strategic locations.
- Consider the information needs of customers and others who visit your facility.

By keeping these guidelines in place and practicing evacuation, we can ensure our employees know how to safely exit our facility and avoid panic.

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