

Are we Prepared for an Emergency?

Emergencies in the workplace cannot be eliminated, but if you have an **emergency action plan** in place and have trained workers to respond quickly and appropriately you can manage, and in some cases, save lives.

Management commitment and worker involvement are essential to an effective emergency action plan. The action plan should be explained to workers and reviewed whenever the plan or responsibilities change.

How good is your emergency action plan?

Find out by asking yourself and your workers the following questions:

General

- Is there a chain of command for reporting emergencies and accounting for personnel?
- Who is responsible for decision-making during emergency conditions?
- Does everyone in the workplace know the procedures to follow in various emergency scenarios (e.g. fire, explosion, earthquake, chemical spill or workplace violence, etc.)?
- Do workers know the escape routes and evacuations procedures including where to reassemble for a headcount or for further instruction?
- Do workers know where emergency supplies are located?

Medical

- Do workers know how to respond in the event of a medical emergency?
- Are there workers trained in CPR and first aid?
- Does the worksite have first aid equipment? (e.g. emergency wash stations, personal protective equipment, oxygen tanks, ice packs, etc.)
- Are emergency response phone numbers (fire department, ambulance, medical facility, etc.) clearly posted where they can be readily accessed?

Fire

- Does the worksite have fire extinguishers that match the possible fire hazards?
- Have workers practiced using the fire extinguishers so that they're aware of their operation and limitations?
- Have the fire extinguishers been recharged within the last year? (They must be tagged to indicate the recharge date.)

Once you have established your emergency action plan, make sure workers are trained and retrained in the possible emergencies they may encounter including emergency and rescue procedures, first aid, and in the location of emergency response equipment and phone number. In an emergency an immediate and educated response can save individual lives, the business operation, and thousands of dollars in potential losses.