

SAFETY MEETING TOPIC

This form shall be completed and kept on file

Job Name _____ Location _____ Job No. _____

Meeting Leader _____ Title _____

Date Held _____ Place _____ Time _____

Subject of Meeting PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES

Emergencies can strike anywhere at anytime, and are not limited to fires. As you are probably aware, construction workers are not immune to emergencies. Emergency situations can have a tremendous impact on human life and be extremely damaging to business. For emergencies such as fires, floods, and earthquakes, planning ahead is critical. By preparing for emergencies, lives and property can be saved.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Some emergencies are territorial, while others know no boundaries. Earthquakes are more common in California than they are in New York, but a fire can strike anywhere and at anytime. Before preparing for an emergency, your employer must know what situations you are likely to face. Emergency situations can include the following:

- Earthquake
- Fire (Internal and External Structure)
- Fire (Grounds, Brush, Forrest)
- Explosion (Gas Supply Line)
- Flood
- Hazardous Material Spill/Release
- Medical
- Vehicle Accident
- Weather Extremes (Wind, Cold, Rain and Lightening)

In some cases, emergencies may occur in combinations and you must be prepared to face a variety of situations. For instance, if a fire cannot be controlled in its early stages, it might reach and ignite explosive material. The explosion could further weaken the structure in which you are working or release hazardous material. When such catastrophes occur, the likelihood of injuries increases. What started out as a single fire can spread into a major problem with structural, medical and environmental complications.

To understand what types of emergencies you might face, you have to first look at your operations. By identifying the types of hazards associated with construction work, the materials beings used, job locations and the equipment you use, your employer can begin to plan how to avoid and respond to certain emergencies. The so called "Act of God" emergency cannot be avoided. But by understanding which emergencies you are more likely to face, and what type of impact they might have, you can be prepared to take actions that will lessen their effects.

EMERGENCY JOB DUTIES

Many times, the effect an emergency situation has depends on how well you and others respond to the event. A good emergency action plan will identify and assign certain responsibilities to individuals or groups thus forming an emergency action team. By knowing and performing your specific job in an emergency situation, the impact on lives and property can be greatly reduced.

Emergency Coordinator – In an emergency, one individual has to take command and coordinate the efforts of others. This individual must have authority and respond well in critical situations. At the same time, it is important that everyone follow the coordinator's instructions and relay important information to him as needed. In most cases the coordinator will also act as a go-between with emergency services such as fire and police departments.

Emergency Shut Down – Many times the impact of an emergency is lessened by shutting down critical systems. This may include natural gas supply lines, electrical power and certain pieces of equipment. If you are responsible for such action, you will have to know where the shut-offs are located at each new jobsite.

Evacuation Monitors – If the building or structure needs to be evacuated, it should be done in an orderly and calm manner. Identified evacuation routes should be followed, and all employees should gather in designated staging areas to be counted. Evacuation Monitors will ensure a safe and orderly evacuation and perform a head count of employees under their authority.

First Aid Responders – All too often emergencies are accompanied by injuries and illnesses. By responding quickly and correctly with first-aid, lives can be saved and the severity of injury lessened.

Perhaps your most important assignment is the protection of your own life. If you have not been assigned another duty during an emergency situation, your prime responsibility will be to seek safety by the best means available to you. Normally this would mean following designated procedures. In the event that your normal evacuation route has been blocked, proceed to the nearest one available to you and then go to your assigned staging area.

Additional types of emergency responder duties include: Spill Response Team for HazMat releases, Fire Brigades and Emergency Rescue Teams. Your employer's Emergency Action Plan will have more details about specific emergencies and assigned job duties.

EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

When fires or chemical spills occur, or when first-aid is needed, having the right equipment on hand can improve the chances of successfully responding to the situation. Emergency equipment is an important part of any emergency action plan. But having equipment means having to maintain it as well as having somebody on staff that is trained to use it.

OSHA requires all employees to be trained on how to use fire extinguishers, but certain first-aid, spill response, or emergency rescue equipment should only be used by trained individuals.

There is a variety of emergency equipment made to meet the needs of any situation. First-aid kits are a good example of emergency equipment. These can be basic, with nothing more than bandages and alcohol, or they can be very elaborate with emergency oxygen tanks, antiseptics, splints, resuscitation masks and the like.

If your responsibilities include using emergency equipment, make sure you know what it is, where it is, how to use it and what its limitations are. Timing is critical in many emergencies. If your response is slowed because you are unfamiliar with the equipment or its location, you may be putting someone else at risk. In some cases, the general contractor on a job site will be responsible for maintaining such emergency equipment. In other situations, you may carry some emergency equipment, such as a first aid kit, in your truck.

Types of emergency equipment include:

- Fire Extinguishers
- Fire Hoses
- Chemical Absorbents
- Spill Socks
- Rescue Harnesses
- Lifelines and Retrieval Systems
- Flares
- Flashlights
- Emergency Oxygen
- Combustible Gas and Oxygen Meters

Emergency equipment kits may include many things. For this industry, you might need tools, brooms, blankets, first-aid kits, flashlights, personal protective equipment, spill response materials and water. If any of these items are removed to be used for non-emergency work, there's a good possibility that they won't be there when they are needed. Never take emergency equipment unless it is an emergency and you have been properly trained.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Whenever any emergency occurs, it is important that we know what procedures to follow in order to protect our own lives. If a fire were to break out would you try to fight it, evacuate the building, or duck and cover in place? If you evacuated, what should you do next? Would you stand around looking confused, offer your services to the fire department, go home, or go to a staging area to be accounted for?

Knowing what to do is important. When disasters occur, people intend to hit the panic button and do a lot of the wrong things. By establishing emergency procedures and providing you with training, the urge to panic can be controlled. That is why an emergency action plan is developed. It outlines the procedures to be followed for the types of emergencies identified earlier.

Often times procedures for one type of emergency are similar, but the circumstances may change what you do. For instance, let's say a fire started which was too large to fight with an extinguisher. You would need to evacuate the structure. But what if a propane tank exploded. Obviously it would be important to evacuate the building and go to a staging area, but the damage caused by the explosion might alter evacuation routes or prevent you from performing one of your emergency duties.

Having alternate route and determining the important of what should be done, is another part of emergency procedures. Weather emergencies have a set of procedures all their own, as to do earthquakes, but once again some of the elements are the same, such as gathering in staging areas to be counted. Know what should be done in each situation, as well as how these things may change from jobsite to jobsite. Remember, you should never risk your life unnecessarily.

An important part of emergency response is being aware that agencies such as the fire and police departments will be responding. How quickly they are able to establish their positions and begin work can make a big difference in the outcome of the emergency. Once you've evacuated the structure, watch out for emergency vehicles and don't interfere with emergency services. If you have important information, such as the knowledge of a fellow worker trapped inside, let the emergency coordinator know. If the coordinator can't be found, you may tell a member of the responding agency.