

Emergency Response Planning

Emergency Response Planning has taken on greater importance in the last several years as manufacturing technology has advanced with increased usage of chemicals and new processes. In addition, disasters such as Bhopal, India have created apprehension in the communities which are located near industrial plants. The necessity for adequate emergency response planning has been addressed by the Federal government with the recently-passed Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA). Emergency Response Planning will become an even more important issue in the future as manufacturing, technology, and residential communities try to peacefully coexist.

Purpose

The purpose of Emergency Response Planning is essentially to protect the life, property, and the assets of the corporation.

Scope

The scope of the plan concerns the types of emergencies that the plan will address. By defining emergencies and developing responses or the “expected” situations which could arise, one is better suited to cope with the unexpected or unforeseeable.

Functional Responses

Emergencies should be separated by type or by area of the plant that may require extraordinary responses. The basic types of emergency that nearly all facilities can face are:

- Fire or Explosion – structures, materials, and equipment
- Multiple Severe Injuries – employees, visitors, general public
- Hazardous Material Release – spills, leaks, emissions from the plant
- Utility Outage; the loss of power – electricity, steam, refrigeration, gas, etc.
- Geological/Meteorological Occurrences – hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, etc.
- Civil Disturbances–riot, strike, terrorist activity, etc.
- Evacuation–although not an emergency situation, this is a response to many emergencies and should be specifically addressed.
- Bomb Threat

The importance of these functional responses is determined on a location-by-location basis. By identifying the risks involved on site and quantifying them by determining their relative probability and the impact of the resultant loss to the business, an appropriate response can then be developed to protect the company from such an event.

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Personnel Responsibilities

Once the functional responses have been developed, it is necessary to define the responsibilities of the personnel on site and to select employees and management to fill these roles.

1. Emergency Coordinator
 - Should be a member of management capable of making quick decisions. Knowledge of processes, the facility, and surrounding areas is a necessity.
2. Response Team
 - Management and employees selected to respond at once to an emergency. Training of team members will be in accordance with the scope of the plan.
3. Management/Supervisors
 - If not already involved above, may be responsible for evacuation in their areas, including searching and headcounts.
4. Security Staff
 - Depending on their professional capabilities, may be assigned to various duties from traffic control to first response.
5. Communications
 - Within the plant and to the outside is essential for successful response. Persons designated will be responsible for keeping phone lines open, calling additional response personnel, etc.
6. Employees
 - Normally responsible only for reporting emergency situations and following instructions if evacuation or other response is necessary.

Preplanning With Emergency Services

Establishing a good working relationship with police, fire department, and medical services is essential for emergency response. If these agencies have prior knowledge of your plant, its systems, chemicals, and other hazards or concerns, they will be able to assist more effectively.

Dealing With The Media

The media should be provided with factual information concerning the emergency in a timely manner. This will often prevent their imagination from taking over and publishing exaggerated stories of what has actually occurred. Steps must also be taken to prevent media personnel from injuring themselves or interfering with response activities.

The media can offer an extremely valuable service by providing information to the community within moments of an emergency, by way of radio and television emergency broadcasts.

Training

In order to condition a prompt, reliable, and correct response, training must be provided. Training is applicable to all involved from the emergency coordinator down to the employee. Training efforts, exercises, classes, etc. should be documented.

The amount of training required will depend on the level of hazard of response activity. The emergency coordinator and response team will probably need the most. Management, supervisors, and communications personnel may require less. Employee training is often covered during their initial indoctrination/orientation program. The most important points to consider include:

- Alarm system – What does it sound like? What must the employee do when he hears an alarm?
- Emergency equipment – Is it necessary for my part of the response? How is it used?
- Evacuation procedures – How do I get myself out of the plant? What is the best exit route? Do I have any other responsibilities during evacuation?
- Chemicals – What hazards do they present? How do I protect myself? Where are they located?

Drills

In order to test the plan, a drill is necessary.

A drill should test all elements of the response plan on a periodic basis. To conduct an appropriate drill the plant must stage an incident. Beforehand, observers must be selected to time and take notes, any outside agency participation should be requested, and a notice announcing the intent of a drill given to all employees. From the notes of the observers a written critique is prepared. The critique should point out deficiencies and corrective measures that should be taken to revise and improve the plan.

Auditing

As a visitor to a manufacturing site an auditor can provide a fresh pair of eyes to assess planning efforts. The key items which are examined include all of the above but in the following format:

- Hazardous materials
- Manufacturing processes
- Area hazards and risks
- Activation of emergency procedures
- Evacuation procedures
- Emergency services
- Worst case scenario

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