

# EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS

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## LEHIGH VALLEY

Is your organization prepared to respond to an emergency? What would you do in the event of a catastrophic fire or active shooter situation? Whether or not your company can promptly and effectively respond to an emergency may be the difference between life and death. If your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) begins and ends with a 9-1-1 call, you need to re-think your plan.

### What Is an EAP?

Simply stated, an EAP is a written policy, outlining the procedures to be followed during a variety of probable situations, including fire, tornado, floods, active shooter, etc.

### Why Is Having an EAP Important?

Well-written plans result in fewer injuries and deaths and less property damage and financial loss. The best written plans will reap many benefits, including:

- Earning a reputation for prioritizing safety of staff and clients.
- Establishing a good working relationship with local police and fire department personnel.

- Increasing employees' sense of involvement and responsibility.
- Creating a culture of safety and awareness.

### Is an EAP Required?

Yes. Requirements for an EAP from the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) fall under 29 CFR 1910.38. If you have more than 10 employees, your EAP must be a formalized, written program that is communicated to all employees. Organizations with 10 or fewer employees may verbally communicate the plan to their employees. However, it is always a good idea to have a written program in order to communicate consistent information throughout your organization.

Failure to follow this standard can result in a violation of OSHA's regulation and potentially lead to a citation. OSHA's General Duty Clause, Sec-

tion (5)(a)(1), also requires employers to "furnish to each of his employees a place of employment which is free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees."

### What Are the Minimum Plan Requirements?

All EAP's must be site-specific. Locations may have different layouts, and emergency response times, and may even be subject to different types of emergencies (e.g., while a location in California would include earthquake procedures, a location in Kansas would focus on the more probable scenario of a tornado). A well-written EAP will contain at least the minimum requirements outlined by OSHA's regulation 29 CFR 1910.38(c)(1-6):

- Procedures for reporting fires and other emergencies.
- Procedures for emergency evacuation, including types of evacuation and exit route assignments.
- Procedures to be followed by employees who remain to operate critical plant operations before they evacuate.
- Procedures to account for all employees after evacuation.
- Procedures to be followed by employees performing rescue and medical duties.
- The name and job title of every employee who may be contacted by employees who need more information about the plan.

### Raise the Bar

While the minimum requirements described above will put you in compliance with OSHA's regulation, why not raise the

bar? Consider inviting local fire and law enforcement personnel to conduct a walk-through of each of your facilities. Provide them with a layout of each building. Consider numbering each room with a visible sign in the window to better communicate where the emergency is occurring when help arrives. Familiarize your staff with evacuation routes and make sure they are clearly marked. This is especially true for new hires who may be unfamiliar with the building layouts.

### Training

It is too late to pull procedures from the bookshelf during an emergency. Everyone needs to know what is expected of them **before** an emergency occurs. Once you develop your EAP, holding regular drills will 1) reinforce the procedures

until they become instinctive; and 2) reveal any gaps or issues in your current plan; allowing you to correct these problems. It is critical that everyone understands his roles and responsibilities. This can be accomplished through company-wide training, which should occur on an annual basis and as a part of your regular onboarding process.

### Emergency Grab Kits

Emergency grab kits contain items essential during emergency situations. They are typically small backpacks stocked with essential supplies and located at emergency exits for a quick grab and go. Contents can include water, first aid supplies, Mylar thermal blankets, flashlights, emergency contact information, whistles and megaphones.

### Getting Started

OSHA's website provides information on EAP's and includes a section entitled, "Create Your Own EAP." Check out the following link to get started: <https://tinyurl.com/y2mhhkup>

Your insurance broker should be able to assist you in developing and rolling out your new EAP. Remember, the best time to develop an EAP is **BEFORE** an emergency!



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