Emergency Preparedness

Emergencypreparedness is a well-known concept in protecting workers' safety and health. Putting together a comprehensive emergency action plan involves conducting a hazard assessment to determine what, if any, physical or chemical hazards inside or from outside the workplaces could cause an emergency.

Emergencies in the workplace are brought about by both natural and man-made disasters. These include extreme weather, wildfires, vandalism, earthquakes, chemical spills, explosions, and disease outbreaks. Some of these can be forecast like tornadoes, but others – like a fire – can happen without warning. A team should be tasked with identifying potential risks to your operations. These could be based on the type of business you run and the geographical location of your company. The first step in any risk assessment plan is to identify hazards and risk factors in the workplace. These could be equipment, processes, or conditions that pose harm to employees and customers. Once this is done, the team can analyze risks that could result from the hazard and come up with ways to eliminate or manage them.

Standard emergency action plans (EAP) for the workplace include:

* Fire
* Hurricane/Severe storm
* Flood
* Terrorism
* Bioterrorism
* Gunman/Active Shooter
* Electrical outage
* Medical emergency
* Poisoning
* Chemical spill
* Biohazard spill

What to include in an EAP include:

* Type of workplace response – who does what and how
* Location of emergency items:
  + Fire extinguishers
  + Flashlights
  + Buckets
  + Medical kit
  + AED
  + Safety apparel
* Who is assigned to retrieve the needed emergency item
* Communication protocols and hierarchy
* Evacuation procedure
* Meeting locations after evacuation
* Securing assets – money, equipment, turning off power, etc
* Emergency numbers

Emergency Codes

Depending on your facility, some or all of these code may be appropriate to use in the event of an emergency.

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| **Emergency Code** | **Designation** |
| Code Red | Fire |
| Code Blue | Adult Medical Emergency |
| Code Pink | Child Medical Emergency |
| Code Amber | Child Abduction |
| Code Black | Bomb Threat |
| Code Silver | Gunman or Hostage Situation |
| Code Orange | Hazardous Spill, Decontamination Needed |
| Code Grey | Security Needed |
| Code White | Severe Weather Advisory |
| Code Clear | Situation has been resolved, code ended |

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) maintains broad and industry specific guidelines on effective business emergency and communication plans, offering resources for businesses of all niches and sizes to build the core of their disaster preparedness checklist, including:

* **Conducting risk assessments**: To identify an organization’s most pertinent potential incidents, often related to your industry or your geographic location. For example, being prepared for chemical spills in a waste-treatment facility or having a tornado preparedness plan for an office in Oklahoma.
* **Select response teams, leadership personnel**: To initiate and oversee the response plan in the event of an incident, maintaining a sense of calm, stability and direction during these often-stressful times.
* **Scaffold an action plan**: To inform the step-by-step safety and security procedures protecting the workforce and facility.

The best business emergency response plans take a holistic rather than a microscopic approach to hazards planning. This assures speedy, proactive and intuitive responses to emergencies, increasing the likelihood of successful outcomes. Forcing employees to memorize a novel-sized list of individual threat plans and procedures tends to stifle morale and cause confusion, not capability, during an emergency — the opposite of what you want.