



How to develop your emergency response plan

You've invested a lot of time and money in your business. That's why it's so important for you to have a plan to help protect your assets during an emergency or disaster.

Of course, some emergencies aren't preventable—like hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes. But others, like fires, spills, and injuries can be addressed with safety controls. No matter the emergency, preplanning your emergency response strategy is key. We have some suggestions below to help you. We've also included a sample checklist for your evacuation plan.

While we can't predict every type of emergency, we suggest your strategy include action plans in these key areas:

- **Inspections:** Locate and eliminate or control hazardous conditions. If you haven't already done so, incorporate these inspections into your programs for preventing fires and work-related accidents.
- **Emergency equipment:** Determine the type, quantity, and placement of emergency equipment such as alarm systems, first aid supplies, and firefighting equipment. Provide training as needed and inspect or test the equipment regularly.
- **Exits:** Evaluate your exits for prominence, safety, and easy access. Conduct drills to ensure orderly exits in the event of an emergency.
- **Evacuation of personnel:** Create an evacuation plan that gives people in a state of confusion the proper direction for an orderly exit. Form an emergency response committee to create and communicate the plan, train employees, and assign responsibilities.
- **Communications:** Routinely share your emergency action plan with employees. An informed group is more likely to respond to an emergency calmly.



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Evacuation response checklist

Use this guide when evaluating the elements of your emergency response program:

FLOOR DIAGRAMS

- Are maps outlining exit routes visibly placed on each floor?
- Does each map include a “You are here” point of origin?
- Are room numbers, floor, and directions given?
- Are directions to stairwells marked?

EXIT PATHS TO STAIRWELLS

- Are paths to exits straight and unobstructed?
- Are instructions posted at changes of direction en route to an emergency exit?
- Are doors that do not lead to an exit prominently marked NOT AN EXIT?

EMERGENCY STAIRWELLS

- Are stair treads and risers in good condition?
- Are stairwells free of storage or any other obstructions?
- Are all stairwells equipped with stable handrails?
- Does each emergency stairwell go directly to the grade-floor exit level without interruption? If a stairwell terminates at some interim point in the building, are there clear directions at that point that show the way to the exit?
- Is there a provision for directing occupants to refuge areas out of and away from the building when they exit?
- Is a head count completed during and after the evacuation?
- Is there adequate emergency lighting in the stairwell?
- Are any bulbs and/or fixtures broken or missing?
- Are floor numbers displayed prominently on both sides of exit doors?

ELEVATORS

- Are signs prominently posted at and in elevators warning of dangers if used during fire and/or emergency evacuations?

EMERGENCY EXIT DOORS

- Are all emergency exits properly identified, unobstructed, and illuminated?
- Do all exit doors open easily in the proper direction?
- Are all exit doors self-closing?
- Are any exit doors propped open?

EMERGENCY LIGHTING

- In the event of an electrical power failure or interruption of service in the building, is automatic or manually operated emergency lighting available for building and exit stairwells?
- Are standby lights easily accessible during an emergency?
- Is there an emergency generator in the building? Is it operable?
- Is the emergency lighting tested on a regular basis?

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

- Is there a plan to notify building occupants of an emergency evacuation?
- If messengers must be used, have they been properly instructed?
- Is the communication system in good working condition, maintained, and tested?
- Is the communication system protected?
- Do all occupants know how to contact a central emergency building control to report a dangerous situation?

EVACUATION ASSISTANCE

- Are there elderly or physical impaired persons who will need assistance during emergency evacuations?
- Are provisions made for their evacuation during an emergency?
- Have you determined who will assist, how they'll be moved, and where they'll be transported?

Remember, while we can't predict every emergency, having a plan in place will help ensure an orderly and safe evacuation. Feel free to use this sample checklist or customize it to fit your business's emergency response strategy.