

Action Steps to Create a Plan for Handling Emergencies

Preplanning is essential for successfully minimizing any adverse effects of an emergency or disaster on a business and its operations. Emergencies and disasters can take many forms, including physical perils, work accidents, or deliberate acts of terrorism or sabotage. This handout presents the steps in developing plans to help a business survive an emergency.

- Select/appoint an individual to be responsible for creating the plan.
- Identify the exposures needing controls. Some examples are terrorism; bomb threats; natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods; fires; workplace violence; and hazardous chemical spills.
- Decide if ONE plan, or separate plans for each exposure, needs to be developed.
- Build a list of organization names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, points of contact names of emergency response resources. Examples of emergency resources include: police, fire, alarm service, hospitals, insurance broker, poison center, public health department, telephone company, utilities, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FMEA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and insurance carriers.
- Draft the plan(s), covering prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery issues.
- Establish target dates for completing each section of the plan and one date for the entire plan.
- Build plans as either Action Guides, Response Plans, or Emergency Management Plans.
 - Action Guides are usually in a checklist format listing the steps that need to be accomplished when an event happens. It generally outlines those company personnel and outside agencies to be called, what information is to be collected, and what actions are to be taken. These guides are generally part of a more comprehensive emergency management plan.

- Response Plans are also called contingency plans and contain a more detailed description of the steps listed in the Action Guides. Response Plans will generally provide more information on the actions that must be implemented to limit damage from an emergency and do not deal with pre-emergency or recovery planning.
- Emergency Management Plans are comprehensive documents that include the Action Guides and Response Plans. It describes the methods used to prevent emergencies, actions when event happens, activities needed to keep the organization operational, and steps to bring company back to full operation.
- After the plan is drafted, take inventory of the equipment required, employee knowledge and skill levels, and develop a shortfall list. This list documents the equipment that has to be purchased or, if purchase is not an option, how the plan can be modified. Also, develop all training requirements needed for execution of the plan.
- Consider these special issues while building the plan. Does the business operate outside of normal hours and thus need additional, trained personnel? Are there subcontractors working in the facility and are they accounted for in the plan? Are workflow and processes stable or do they change frequently? Have backup personnel been identified and trained for each critical emergency action? Does the facility rely only on commercially supplied electrical power?
- Select/appoint individuals responsible to implement the plan and conduct training.
- Finally, setup a schedule to exercise the plan and audit the success of each step or action. The more frequently the plan is exercised, the better prepared personnel will be, the more easily potential problems will be identified, and corrections made before any real emergency occurs.