

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

An emergency in the workplace is any situation that threatens the lives of workers, customers, or the public. The emergency can disrupt or shut down operations, cause physical or environmental damage, and can be either natural or man-made. Emergency evacuations are more common than many people realize, including evacuations in the workplace.

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the most frequent causes of evacuations in the U.S. each year are fires and floods. In addition, a wide variety of emergencies, both man-made and natural, may require a workplace to be evacuated.

The following natural and man-made disasters could impact our business

- Tornado
- Fire
- Flood
- Inclement weather (blizzard, ice storm, etc.)
- Violent intruder

Deciding whether to shelter-in-place or evacuate to safety (i.e., get away from a threat or hazard) is among the most important decisions that must be made during an emergency. If local authorities or the on-scene coordinator (e.g., incident commander or other official in charge) specifically give instructions to evacuate or seek medical treatment, do so immediately. In very hazardous situations, local officials may require mandatory evacuations. During other times, local officials may advise, or workers and employers may decide, to evacuate to avoid situations they believe are potentially dangerous.

Many disasters are no-notice events, meaning that there is no warning before they occur. These types of events do not allow time for people to gather even the most basic necessities.

### What should workers know before and do during an emergency evacuation?

- Be familiar with the worksite's emergency evacuation plan.
- Know the pathway to at least two exits from every room/area at the workplace.
- Recognize the sound/signaling method of the evacuation or other alarms and their different meanings.
- Understand who to contact in an emergency, as well as the specific procedures they will be expected to use.
- Know how many desks or cubicles are between their workstations and two of the nearest exits to escape in the dark, if necessary.
- Know where the fire/evacuation alarms are located and how to use them.
- Report damaged or malfunctioning safety systems and back-up systems.
- Report changes in health that may affect their ability to safely evacuate to their supervisor

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**Emergency Evacuation is the immediate and urgent movement of people away from a threat or actual occurrence of a hazard.**

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## What should workers do when an emergency occurs?

- Listen carefully for instructions (if applicable) and follow the instructions.
- When instructed, leave the area quickly, but in an orderly manner, following the work site's emergency evacuation plan.
- Do not use elevators when evacuating a burning building, unless they are properly designed and designated "occupant evacuation elevators."
- Report to the designated meeting place, and ensure they make contact with the person charged with worker accountability.
- Do not re-enter the building until directed to do so by authorities.

## What should workers do if trapped?

- Stay calm and takes steps to protect yourself.
- Go to a room with an outside window.
- Use a telephone/cell phone to call for help if possible.
- Stay where rescuers can see you and wave a light-colored cloth to attract attention.
- Specifically, during fire events:
  - Go directly to the nearest fire- and smoke-free stairwell, recognizing that in some circumstances the only available exit route may contain smoke or fire.
  - Crawl low, under the smoke, to breathe cleaner air.
  - Test doors for heat before opening them by placing the back of your hand against the door so you do not burn your palm and fingers. Do not open a hot door. Find another exit route. Keep "fire doors" closed to slow the spread of smoke and fire.
  - Stuff wet clothing, towels, or newspapers around the cracks in doors to prevent smoke from entering your room.
  - Do not open or break windows unless absolutely necessary. Doing so could draw heat or smoke towards you.

## Emergencies in a client's home

1. Life Threatening Emergency:
  - a. If it is a medical emergency which jeopardizes the life of the client, immediately call 911.
  - b. Then call the main office number for your branch. This number is answered 24 hours a day. If necessary, the qualified professional (QP) will be contacted.
    1. Duluth: 218-727-0990
    2. Bemidji: 218-755-5546
    3. Finlayson: 320-233-0119
    4. Hibbing: 218-263-4177
  - c. Contact the family and/or responsible party.
  - d. Stay with the client and assist them in any way possible until help arrives.

2. Non-Life-Threatening Emergency:

The QP, PCA, and homemaker shall be prepared to provide simple emergency care, evaluate the environment, and notify the appropriate people as soon as it is safe to leave the client, or as soon as another person arrives on the scene. The PCA or homemaker shall notify their branch office and the office will be responsible for contacting the QP.

Emergency phone numbers shall be kept in the client's chart in the home. These shall include; the name, address, and phone number of the client's attending physician, and the name and phone number of the nearest relative and/or friend.

It is very important that you familiarize yourself with the name of the client's physician and the hospital of choice. Make sure to do the proper charting so that all the necessary information is on the chart.

3. Special instructions:

Each client's chart will contain the name and phone number of his/her physician, immediate caregiver and the 911 number. The QP shall discuss emergency care with the clients and complete the Authorization for Emergency Procedure Plan with a copy left in the client's residence.

## **Shelter-in-Place Procedures**

In our area, tornados are not that unexpected. Therefore, for your safety and the client's safety, shelter-in-place procedures need to be followed. When you are in the client's home, that is considered your worksite.

Procedures for shelter in place at a worksite may include the following:

**Shelter-in-Place** means selecting an interior room(s) within a facility, potentially with no or few windows, and taking refuge there.

- Close the business.
- When authorities provide direction to shelter-in-place, everyone should do so immediately. Do not drive or walk outdoors.
- If there are clients, customers, or visitors in the building, provide for their safety by asking them to stay, not leave.
- Unless there is an imminent threat, ask workers, clients, customers, and visitors to call their emergency contact to let them know where they are and that they are safe.
- Turn on call-forwarding or alternative telephone answering systems or services. If the business has voice mail or an automated attendant, change the recording to indicate that the business is currently closed, and that staff and visitors are remaining in the building until authorities advise that it is safe to leave.
- Close exterior doors and close windows, air vents, and fireplace dampers. Workers familiar with the building's mechanical systems should turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems, and clothes dryers. Some systems automatically provide for exchange of inside air with outside air. These systems, in particular, need to be turned off, sealed, or disabled.
- If sheltering in place due to an external threat, such as a dangerous intruder or active shooter situation, consider locking exterior doors. Ensure that locking mechanisms allow workers to exit the work site if necessary.
- If there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds, or curtains.
- Ensure workers are positioned away from exterior windows and seek shelter in areas that offer adequate protection.
- Gather essential disaster supplies, such as nonperishable food, bottled water, battery-powered radios, first-aid supplies, flashlights, batteries, duct tape, plastic sheeting, plastic garbage bags, medications, and other personal items.
- Select an interior room(s) on the ground floor with the fewest windows or vents. Large storage closets, utility rooms, pantries, copy rooms, bathrooms and conference rooms without exterior windows are ideal.
- It is ideal to have a land-line telephone in the room(s) selected, if possible. Call emergency contacts and have the phone available if there is a need to report a life-threatening condition. Cellular telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency.

- Take emergency supplies and go into the designated room.
- Write down the names of everyone in the room and call designated emergency contacts to report who is in the room and their affiliation (employee, visitor, client, customer).
- Listen to the radio, watch television, or use the Internet for further instructions until it is safe or until instructed to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in the community.

## **Active Shooter**

Although rare and unlikely to happen, being prepared is extremely important. Active shooter and other dangerous intruder situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Typically, the immediate deployment of law enforcement is required to stop the shooting and mitigate harm to victims. Because active shooter situations are often over within 10 to 15 minutes, before law enforcement arrives on the scene, individuals must be prepared both mentally and physically to deal with an active shooter situation. Evacuation may be one option during an active shooter situation.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) provides the following guidance for evacuation during an active shooter situation; If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises. Be sure to:

- Have an escape route and plan in mind
- Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow
- Leave your belongings behind
- Help others escape, if possible
- Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be
- Keep your hands visible
- Follow the instructions of any police officers
- Do not attempt to move wounded people
- Call 911 when you are safe

## **Our Critical Operations**

The following is a prioritized list of our critical operations staff :

Notification	Branch Manager	Call QP's, scheduler, office staff
Notification	Scheduler	Call PCA's and clients
Notification	Administrator	Handle emergency proceedings & questions

In the client's home, the PCA is considered the assembly site manager. Follow the instructions on the emergency procedure plan in the client's home chart and make sure to call the branch office that you work out of.