Emergency Preparedness – Do You Know What to Do?



What's at Stake?

Unexpected emergencies occur every day in many facilities, including laboratories, offices, and residential buildings. It might be a fire, flood, earthquake, shooting, tornado, or hazardous chemical spill. If you don't know what to do during an emergency the odds increase that you or others around you will be injured or killed.

Today we'll review what you should do in an emergency, so you're prepared for the unexpected.

What's the Danger?

- Emergencies we may encounter include:
- Severe weather, such as heavy wind, flooding, tornados, or hurricanes
- Utility outages
- Fires
- Explosions
- Widespread infection
- Hazardous materials
- Earthquakes
- Workplace violence
- Terrorism

Any of these examples can injure or kill you, but if you know what to do in an emergency you increase your odds of making it through the situation safely.

How to Protect Yourself

Confusion and uncertainty are typical obstacles in an emergency and they happen from not knowing or recalling how to react or not recognizing the potential for danger

Knowing and practicing what to do before an emergency occurs is a key step to protecting yourself and others around you. In addition to participating in emergency drills held by your employer, take some time to see how well you can answer the following questions.

WHO

- Who are the qualified first aid personnel for your facility?
- Who on your crew knows CPR?
- Who in your area is trained to clean up a chemical spill?

WHAT

- What factors determine when you evacuate and when you shelter-in-place? Fire and explosions are examples of when to evacuate. You may be told to shelter-in-place during an earthquake, severe weather, or radiological, biological, or chemical release.
- What are the emergency exit routes from your work area? There must be at least two – and more than two are required if the number of employees, size of the building, or how the workplace is arranged will not allow for safe evacuation.
- What phone numbers do you call for various emergency agencies?
- What is the physical address of your work location?
- What are your duties in an emergency?
- What should an emergency kit contain? Do you have one in your car or at work?

WHERE

- Where should you assemble outdoors if you must evacuate?
- Where should you shelter-in-place if necessary?
- Where is the first aid equipment located?
- Where are the nearest telephones in your work area?
- Where is the fire extinguisher located? Do you know how to use it? If not, where and how will you get training?
- Where are the safety showers and eyewash stations in this work area? Do you know how to operate them?
- Where are the SDSs (Safety Data Sheets) for the chemicals used in your work area?

HOW

- How do you activate the alarm for a fire? For any other kind of emergency?
- How do you contact the fire department or a facility fire brigade?
- How would you give directions to an ambulance or other emergency service to reach your area?

Final Word

How did you do? Do you feel you’re ready for an emergency? If not, talk with your supervisor, safety contact, or floor warden to clear up any questions you have. Remember, if you wait for an emergency to learn how to protect yourself, it’s likely already too late.