

## **June 2003 - Employee Emergency Action and Fire Prevention Plans**

The OSHA General Industry Standard 29 CFR 1910 has numerous regulatory requirements where it is necessary to have certain written documents. OSHA standards 1910.38 and 1910.39 that deal with emergency action and fire prevention plans are two such standards that require written plans for handling emergencies. . If you have more than 10 employees, your emergency action and fire prevention plans must be in writing, kept in the workplace and be available to employees for review. If you have 10 or fewer employees, you must still have a plan, but you may communicate the plan orally.

### **Emergency Action Plans**

Plans may vary from company to company because of specific operations, but all plans should follow and comply with the minimum elements established by OSHA. If you have physically impaired workers, your plan must include procedures for their safe evacuation. All employees must be familiar with the evacuation signal, whether it is communicated verbally, or by some distinctive and recognizable signal. For employees with 10 or fewer employees in a particular workplace, direct communications is an acceptable procedure for sounding the alarm provided all employees can hear the alarm.

#### **Minimum elements of an emergency action plan:**

- Procedure for reporting a fire or other emergency
- Procedure for emergency evacuation, including type of evacuation and exit route assignments
- Procedure to be followed by employees who remain to operate critical plant operations before they evacuate
- Rescue and medical duties for those employees who are to perform them
- Procedure to account for all employees after evacuation
- Names or job titles of persons who can be contacted for further information or explanation of duties under the plan

### **Fire Prevention Plan**

Employees must be trained so they understand the alarm procedure, where the alarms are located and how to activate or sound the alarm. Employees should respond immediately when the alarm is sounded and if time permits, secure their work areas by turning off their equipment or shut down the process and secure hazardous materials before evacuating. Emergency telephone numbers for local emergency responders should be posted by all phones. Plot plans showing the location of emergency equipment and primary and alternate evacuation routes must be posted in visible locations throughout the plant and offices. The plan must include a predetermined area for all employees to assemble so a head count can be taken immediately after an emergency evacuation.

#### **Minimum elements of a fire prevention plan:**

- List of all major fire hazards, proper handling and storage procedures for hazardous materials, potential ignition sources and their control, and the type of fire protection equipment necessary to control each major hazard
- Procedure to control accumulation of flammable and combustible waste materials
- Names or job titles of personnel responsible for the control of fuel source hazards
- Procedure for regular maintenance of safeguards installed on heat-producing equipment to prevent the accidental ignition of combustible materials
- A list of systems installed on heat-producing equipment to prevent accidental ignition of combustible materials
- Name or job title of employees responsible for maintaining equipment to prevent or control source of ignition or fires

## **Training and Drills**

As a minimum, the employer must review the emergency action plan and fire prevention plan with each employee covered by the plan. It is recommended that the plan be reviewed at least once a year. The plans must be reviewed with each employee when it is developed or when the employee is initially assigned to a job. In addition, the plans must be reviewed when the employees responsibilities under the plan change and when the plan is changed. In addition, the employer must inform employees upon initial assignment to a job of the fire hazards to which they are exposed.

Drills are an important element of the overall training program. Drills are an actual test of the plans. They provide the opportunity to determine how well your plan works and may bring to light deficiencies in your plan or your training. The evaluation of drills may identify remedial action requirements for such things as plan or procedure updates, additional training needs, equipment/material that is not on hand or for improvement in your alarm system or other communication needs.

Establishing emergency action and fire prevention plans, facilitating employee training, and conducting drills help prevent deaths and serious injuries in the workplace. The goal is to save lives. The plans only work if employees know and follow the procedures.