

Section 9

Emergency Response Plans

Purpose

To become familiar with requirements of an emergency response plan.

To assist in evaluating your worksite's plan for improvement.



Section 9

**What you will find
in this section...**



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Task 1

- Each person should answer the following questions about your own facility.

This task will help you identify problems with your emergency response plan. Think about your own facility in answering the questions below. If everyone in your small group **comes from the same workplace, answer the questions together.** If the people in your small group **come from different workplaces, answer the questions on your own.**

1. Have you ever seen your facility's emergency response plan?
 Yes No
2. Has the company ever explained the written plan in detail to you?
 The company has explained the plan in detail to everyone, including me.
 The company has gone over the plan with a few people, mostly supervisors.
 The company has never gone over the written plan with us.
 Other. Please describe _____
3. Does your facility have an emergency response Haz Mat team?
 Yes No
4. Who at your facility would act as the incident commander in an emergency? Name(s) and job title(s)

 Not sure.
5. Does your facility have awareness level training?
 Yes No Not sure

Task 1

continued

- Each person should answer the following questions about your own facility.

6. Does your facility have personnel trained at the operations level?

Yes No Not sure

7. Does your facility have personnel trained at the Haz Mat technician's or specialist's level?

Yes No Not sure

8. Do you feel that the Haz Mat team is carefully trained?

Don't have a Haz Mat team

Team is well trained.

Team is trained but they could use a lot more.

Team is untrained.

Not sure.

Other. Please describe _____

9. Are there good emergency maps posted around your facility?

▶ No maps posted.

▶ Maps posted but hard to read.

▶ Good maps posted in public places.

▶ Not sure.

Other. Please describe _____

10. Does your facility have emergency drills?

▶ No drills.

▶ Table top drills.

▶ Hands-on drills.

▶ Not sure.

Task 1

continued

- Each person should answer the following questions about your own facility.

11. Does your facility have good communication links to the response team for use during emergencies?

- ▶ We have good communications, equipment, and procedures.
- ▶ Our communications system is okay but not great.
- ▶ Communications are poor.
- ▶ Not sure.

▶ Other. Please describe _____

12. Please describe the emergency alarm system in your facility. Can it be heard or seen everywhere in the facility?

13. Do you believe workers in your facility are really aware of what chemicals could do to them in an emergency situation?

- ▶ Very aware.
- ▶ Somewhat aware.
- ▶ Not too aware.
- ▶ Not sure.

▶ Other. Please describe _____

Task 1

continued

- Each person should answer the following questions about your own facility.

14. Do workers and supervisors know the basics — such as how to use the alarm system, who to call if there is an emergency, where to go, and who will do a head count to make sure everyone got out safely?

- ▶ We all know.
- ▶ Some of us know.
- ▶ Just a few of us know.
- ▶ Not sure.

15. Is spill control equipment stored in a safe and convenient place? Are supplies kept in stock and everything kept in good working order?

- ▶ Spill equipment is easy to get to and always ready to use.
- ▶ Equipment is scattered around and is hard to get to.
- ▶ Supplies are not checked very often.
- ▶ Not sure.

↳ ~~Other~~. Please describe _____

16. Does the company carefully investigate after each spill or release and make changes in procedures or emergency response?

- ↳ ~~Yes~~, they investigate and make changes to prevent the spill.
- ↳ Yes, they investigate but don't make changes.
- ↳ They don't investigate.
- ↳ Other. Please describe _____

17. Is your emergency response plan kept up-to-date?

- ↳ ~~Yes~~
- ↳ ~~No~~
- ↳ ~~Not Sure~~

***Go on to Task #2 after you finish Task #1.
You will report back after Task #2.***

Task 2

- **Compare your Task 1 answers.**
- **List four problems in your facilities' plans.**

In your small groups, compare your answers to the questions in **Task 1**. Develop a list of at least four of the most important problems in your facilities' emergency response plans. Please use the fact sheets in this section to help you. Refer to the fact sheets your group used during the report-back period.

What are the four most important problems in the emergency response plans of your workplace(s)?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Fact Sheet #1

Be Prepared

You're standing on the loading dock. You're watching the liquid ooze from the barrel that was just punctured. It's spreading toward the drain below. "Where does that drain go?" you shout to your co-worker. "I don't know. Do we have anything to block it off? Harry told me to call somebody if there was a spill. I just can't remember who," your co-worker shouts back.

The middle of an emergency is no time to figure out where equipment is stored or what steps you are supposed to follow. Your employer has to plan in advance, and write down standard operating procedures. **This is called a written emergency plan.**

Your facility should plan for different types of emergencies:

- ◆ hazardous materials spills and leaks
- ◆ fires
- ◆ earthquakes and
- ◆ tornadoes, floods or other weather disasters

Different kinds of emergencies need different responses. For example, in case of a tornado, you would want everyone to stay inside and away from windows. But during a spill, you might want everyone to go outside.

A written plan should:

- ② be organized so you can look things up easily,
- ② include lots of "how-to" information (not just copies of safety laws), and
- ② explain who needs to know what.

Fact Sheet #2

Tabletop or Real Life?

A written plan is just a piece of paper. In order for the plan to work, everyone has to know what the plan says and how to put it into action. Plans are usually long and not exciting reading. Most employees won't just sit down and read them. The one best way to get to know the plan is to have a practice emergency response drill.

The best kind of drill is a hands-on response to a spill.

Of course, water or another safe material is spilled, not dangerous chemicals. The emergency response team puts on real protective equipment. You use the same monitoring equipment and radios you would use in an actual spill. The local Haz Mat team and hospital can be included in the drill. Just like a real emergency, you have a meeting afterward to talk about what went well and what needs work.

Some employers do tabletop drills instead of hands-on practice. They make a small cardboard model of a spill. The team moves plastic models around and pretends to respond to the spill. Tabletop drills are not realistic. They can help you find the weak spots in your plan, but not as well as a hands-on spill drill.

Fact Sheet #3

It's The Details that Count

Awritten plan will help you at a spill if it has a lot of specific information. Most written plans do not have enough details in them. Here are some examples of vague plans and how they could be better:

Vague, not helpful

Respirators will be selected on the basis of contaminants.

Appropriate spill control methods will be selected based on the contaminant.

Specific, more useful

The health and safety officer will assign the following respirators for spill control:

Ammonia

35 - 250 ppm: North full-face air-purifying respirator with ammonia cartridges (green).

> 250 ppm or unknown level: MSA Mark II pressure-demand SCBA. And so on.

The health and safety officer will choose the following spill control methods:

Acid spills

Use sand or Sorb-All for diking material. Do NOT dilute with water.

A plan that workers can really use may be longer than a vague plan. But it will actually be used, instead of sitting in a filing cabinet collecting dust.

Fact Sheet #4

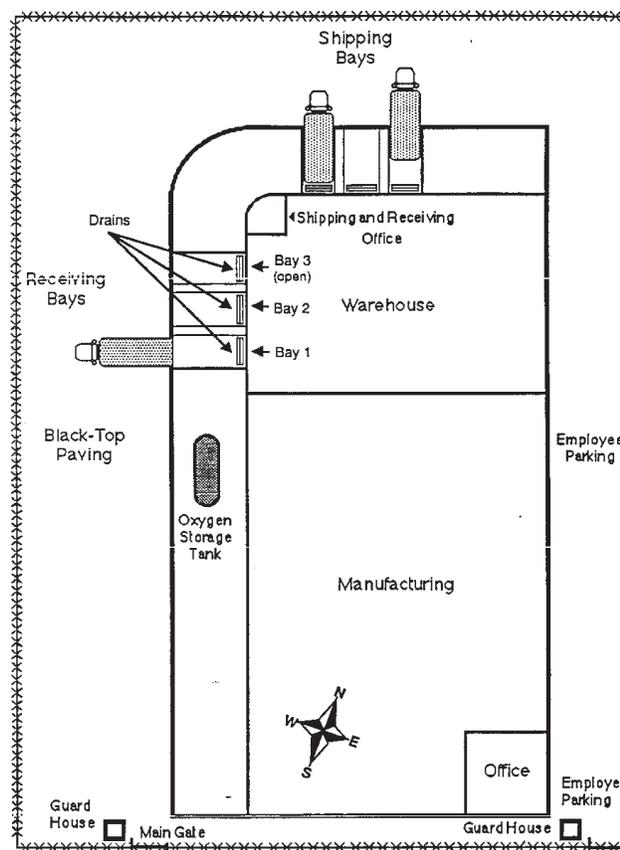
You Can't Get There From Here

One of the most important parts of an emergency plan is a map of the plant.

The map should include:

- Where chemicals are stored — both tanks and small containers.
- Loading docks—where spills often happen.
- Where the “crash cart,” SCBAs, and other emergency supplies are kept.
- Storm drains that will need to be blocked if there is a spill.
- Lakes, streams, or other natural areas that need to be protected if there is a spill.
- Where to go in an emergency, and evacuation routes.
- Important phone numbers—like the plant's emergency number.

In an emergency, a map is the quickest way to get the information you need. Sadly, many plans don't include a good map. One plant used a map of the jogging route inside the plant for its emergency plan! The map didn't show a way out of the plant.



Fact Sheet #5

OSHA Sez

OSHA's HAZWOPER standard says emergency plans must cover the 15 items below. Your health and safety committee should start with the OSHA standard and get even more protections for workers. The OSHA standard is a bare minimum. You wouldn't settle for minimum wage. Why settle for minimum health and safety?

How does your plan compare to the OSHA standard?

| Does the plan include: | Yes | No |
|--|------------|-----------|
| 1. How your employer will work with the fire and rescue service, hospital, and other groups that will be involved if there is a spill. | ___ | ___ |
| 2. Which ambulance service and hospital can handle victims. Have they been contacted and can they handle people contaminated with chemicals? | ___ | ___ |
| 3. Who will do what in an emergency (like a job description for emergencies only). Who is in charge, and so on. What kind of training each person needs. | ___ | ___ |
| 4. How to tell an emergency from a small spill that can be handled in-house. How to prevent spills at your plant (good storage, SOPs, and so on). | ___ | ___ |
| 5. What kind of alarm will be used at your plant to tell everyone there is an emergency. | ___ | ___ |
| 6. How to get out of your plant in an emergency, and who will take a head count to make sure everyone is out. | ___ | ___ |

Fact Sheet #5, continued

| | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 7. A map of your plant, including drains, hills, and weather information (which way the wind usually blows). | --- | --- |
| 8. Where to go if there is a spill at your plant—how far away and safe places. | --- | --- |
| 9. How bystanders will be kept away from a spill at your plant. Who will be allowed in the hot zone, warm zone, and cold zone. | --- | --- |
| 10. How to do decon. Where it will be set up (in the warm zone). Who will do it. | --- | --- |
| 11. Who will give first aid and medical care during an emergency at your plant. How to do decon on an injured person. | --- | --- |
| 12. Your company’s Standard Operating Procedures for dealing with a spill—how to identify it; how to stop leaks; how to stop it from spreading; who to call for clean-up. | --- | --- |
| 13. How your company will choose, use, and train workers on equipment—respirators, CPC, booms, spark-proof tools, and other spill control equipment. | --- | --- |
| 14. How your company will debrief everyone after the spill to improve the next response. | --- | --- |
| 15. How your company will report emergencies to the fire and rescue squad, the Local Emergency Planning Committee, the EPA, and other government agencies. | --- | --- |

Source: OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120 (q) (2)

Fact Sheet #6

An Active Committee

The union health and safety committee should have an active role in improving the plan. The committee has the right to a copy of the plan. The committee should discuss it in detail with workers in all work areas.

Some questions to ask before there is an emergency:

- Do workers know what hazardous materials are stored or used in their work area?
- Do workers know about highly dangerous materials (such as a chlorine tank) in other areas of the plant ?
- Do workers know where to go in an emergency?
- Have workers had training?

The committee should ask workers for ideas about how to improve the plan. For example, there may be problems with chemical storage or handling that the committee doesn't know about. The union also has the right to be part of accident investigations and reviews of emergencies.

The committee may need to be forceful with management to make changes in the plan. They should be clear about what the problems are, and the changes they suggest in the plan. Injuries that happen during spills are good evidence that the plan needs to be changed.



Fact Sheet #7

Community Teamwork

During an emergency, your spill control team may have to work together with the local fire and rescue squad, hospital, and maybe even the police or EPA. Who is in charge? Who will set up decon? Who will do rescue, if needed? Does everyone use the same kind of radio? All of these questions should be answered in the written plan before there is a spill.

Every county already has a group that meets to plan for emergencies. This is called a **Local Emergency Planning Committee, or LEPC**. The committee is usually appointed by the state governor.

The LEPC must include at least one person from each of these five groups:

- Local government,
- Police and fire departments and hospitals (public safety),
- Newspapers, radio and TV stations,
- Community groups (including unions), and
- Owners of plants that use chemicals.



Your local union can ask to be on the LEPC and help improve emergency response in your county.

The LEPC can also get information about chemical storage and how to prevent spills that the health and safety committee at your plant can use.

The LEPC has already done some planning and research on how to handle emergencies. It is a good place for your employer to start, but they probably have to meet with firefighters and talk to hospitals, too.

Fact Sheet #8

What You're Trained to Do vs. What You're Asked to Do

One major problem in many emergency response plans is that there is a major conflict between what you're trained to do and what you're asked to do.

Most UAW members are classified as either awareness or operations level. For the awareness level, all you are supposed to do is notify someone and get away from the release. For the operations level, you are supposed to contain the problem from a safe distance.

But, in many company plans, workers are asked to do much more without the proper training. Here are some examples:

- Some companies ask operations level workers to "secure the spill" and do other active interventions. But if these actions require entering the hazard zone (hot zone) where you might be exposed, then people with more training should handle the incident.
- Other companies ask workers to clean up after spills. If the emergency has been stopped, then you're not doing emergency response at this point. But you might be exposed to very high levels of dangerous chemicals during clean-up. You need special training on the equipment and procedures to use for clean up.
- Even training individual workers at the technician level and turning them loose in emergencies can get people killed. An organized Haz Mat team should be used. Certain trained or experienced workers may be capable of doing emergency response tasks. But, a specially trained Haz Mat team using established procedures and plans provides a much greater margin of safety.

Summary

Emergency Response Plans

- ★ Your employer must plan ahead for hazardous materials emergencies and other disasters (like fires or earthquakes). There is no time at a spill to figure out where booms are stored or fight over who is supposed to do what. An Emergency Response Plan is a Standard Operating Procedure for a spill.
- ★ A written plan alone doesn't do much good. All workers have to be trained to do the emergency response work they will be asked to do. **Practice drills** using actual equipment are vital to make sure the written plan works and that workers know what to do in an emergency.
- ★ The written plan must spell out who does what and how they are supposed to do it. Specific details are needed. For example: "In a spill of MEK, use PVA gloves and suits, blue sorbent socks (for solvents), and Sorb-All in bulk for diking."
- ★ The written plan should include a site map that shows chemical storage containers, loading docks, storm drains, emergency equipment, evacuation routes, and other information you need quickly in an emergency.
- ★ OSHA's list of 15 items that have to be in an emergency plan (on page 9-12) is a bare minimum. You and the health and safety committee have the right to a copy of the plan. The union also has the right to be part of accident investigations and reviews of emergencies. This way the union can make sure the written plan really works for workers.

Summary

continued

Emergency Response Plans

- ★ Your employer has to work together with the local fire and rescue squad, hospital, and any other group that will also respond to a spill. Coordinating with other groups is needed to make your employer's written plan work.