

Manager/Supervisor Risk Management

#136– 3/21/13

A twice weekly e-mail training for YCPARMIA members

TOPIC: SAFETY – EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

This is a common sense topic with common sense approaches. Unfortunately when emergencies arise common sense can be misplaced and mistakes can be made with potentially catastrophic results.

To address this very real but unpredictable threat, the State requires that each member have an overall emergency action plan to address employee safety during emergencies. Additionally the plan needs to address the various risks at each specific location. The plan should include, but is not limited to:

- Emergency escape procedures and routes;
- Procedures to account for all employees after an emergency evacuation;
- Rescue and medical protocols for employees, and who is to perform them;
- How to report fires and other emergencies;
- Name/job titles of persons responsible for explaining/maintaining the plan; and
- There must be an employee alarm or warning system.

The plan needs to consider and address a number of potential emergencies, including fire, explosion, chemical release, flood, earthquake, power outage, bomb threats, criminal acts including robbery and assault, and civil disturbances like riots or protests. There needs to be training for individuals that are responsible under the plan for the evacuation of the facility, and a person responsible for the subsequent head count. The employer must review the plan with the affected employees, and the written plan must be kept in a place where it is available for employees to review.

Training to the plan is the best way to guard against fear, panic, and mistakes during an emergency. Again, it is common sense that when the alarm is given all employees should immediately stop work, secure their area if possible, proceed to the nearest safe exit, and move immediately to the pre-designated gathering point so that a head count can be taken. The plan should also address responsibility for getting non-employees off of the premises. Conversely, the plan needs to address the emergency situation where you need to secure the facility from people off the premises.

What can go wrong? A number of years ago during a safety inspection, a diagram showing escape routes, fire extinguishers, and electric panel shut-offs was found posted on an office bulletin board. Unfortunately, the department had moved to a new building a few years prior to that, and one of the things that made the trip to the new office was the evacuation diagram of the old building. During another inspection at a swim complex, it was discovered that the posted list of emergency contacts and their phone numbers was entirely made up of employees who had retired – in some cases many years prior. Both members had a “plan” but they were obviously not effective. It was also apparent that no one had been given the responsibility for the plans, no one had been trained on their duties under the plans, the plans had not been reviewed with the employees, and the plans had never been updated.

Next Topic: Safety – size versus exposure