

# WORKPLACE EMERGENCY PLANNING AND EVACUATION PREPAREDNESS

2 SAIOSH CPD CREDITS

Learner Guide



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## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This unit standard requires learners to demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding of emergency preparedness and response. Learners credited with this unit standard are capable of:

- Discussing the different types of emergencies that may be encountered in the workplace
- Explaining emergency preparedness and demonstrating response appropriate to the situation

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In times of crisis people usually react in an unstructured and uncontrolled manner. This in turn results in panic making the situation even worse. To prevent this from happening, it is imperative that a well-structured Emergency Preparedness Plan is in place and disseminated to the entire workforce. Should an emergency then occur, everyone will know how to react and what is expected of them.

Emergency planning is therefore considered to be an integral component of any Occupational Health and Safety program. The reason for this is that employers are also required to ensure that worker's health and safety is not threatened through the occurrence of emergencies of any kind while performing their duties.

## **2. PURPOSE**

To provide Evacuation Officers and Assistant Evacuation Officers with the necessary knowledge to enable them to prepare, implement and maintain an emergency evacuation plan whereby they can guide employees to evacuate their work stations in an orderly and structured manner during an emergency situation.

### 3. CAUSES OF EMERGENCY CONDITIONS / SITUATIONS

#### 3.1 Definition of an Emergency

An emergency can be defined as “a situation that poses an immediate threat to human life or serious damage to property”.

#### 3.2 Common causes of Emergency Conditions / Situations

There are literally thousands of events that could result in the occurrence of an emergency condition/ situation. The following are a few of those:

##### 3.2.1 Acts of Nature (Natural Disasters):

- i. Floods
- ii. Wind storms
- iii. Rain storms
- iv. Earthquakes
- v. Fires
- vi. Droughts
- vii. Epidemics, etc.



##### 3.2.2 Human Caused (Manmade) Disasters:

- i. Sabotage
- ii. Explosions
- iii. Fires
- iv. Unrest
- v. Bombs, etc.



##### 3.2.3 Human Error:

Human error is the single largest cause of workplace emergencies, which can result from:

- i. Sub-standard acts
- ii. Sub-standard maintenance of equipment
- iii. Carelessness
- iv. Misconduct
- v. Substance abuse
- vi. Fatigue
- vii. Stress



### 4. NECESSITY FOR EMERGENCY PLANS

A definite plan to deal with major emergencies is an important element of OH&S programs. Besides the major benefit of providing guidance during an emergency, developing the plan has other advantages. You may discover unrecognised hazardous conditions that would aggravate an emergency situation and you can work to eliminate them.

The planning process may bring to light deficiencies, such as the lack of resources (equipment, trained personnel, supplies), or items that can be rectified before an emergency

occurs. In addition, an emergency plan promotes safety awareness and shows the organisation's commitment to the safety of workers.

The lack of an emergency plan could lead to severe losses such as multiple casualties and possible financial collapse of the organisation.

An attitude of "it can't happen here" may be present. People may not be willing to take the time and effort to examine the problem. However, emergency planning is an important part of company operation.

Since emergencies situations will occur from time to time, preplanning is necessary to prevent possible disaster. An urgent need for rapid decisions, shortage of time, and lack of resources and trained personnel can lead to chaos during an emergency. Time and circumstances in an emergency mean that normal channels of authority and communication cannot be relied upon to function routinely. The stress of the situation can lead to poor judgement resulting in severe losses.

## **5. OBJECTIVE OF AN EMERGENCY PLAN**

An emergency plan specifies procedures for handling sudden unexpected situations. The objective is to reduce the possible consequences of the emergency by:

- preventing/minimising fatalities and injuries;
- preventing/reducing damage to buildings, stock, and equipment; and
- Accelerating the resumption of normal operations.

You should also consider potential impact to the environment and to the community in your emergency plan.

Development of the plan begins with a vulnerability assessment. These results of the study will show:

- how likely a situation is to occur;
- what means are available to stop or prevent the situation; and
- What is necessary for a given situation?

From this analysis, appropriate emergency procedures can be established. At the planning stage, it is important that several groups be asked to participate. Among these groups, the joint occupational health and safety committee can provide valuable input and a means of wider worker involvement. Appropriate municipal officials should also be consulted since control may be executed by the local government in major emergencies and additional resources may be available. Communication, training and periodic drills will ensure adequate performance if the plan must be carried out.

## 6. VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

Although emergencies by definition are sudden events, their occurrence can be predicted with some degree of certainty. The first step is to find which hazards pose a threat to any specific enterprise.

When a list of hazards is made, records of past incidents and occupational experience are not the only sources of valuable information. Since major emergencies are rare events, knowledge of both technological (chemical or physical) and natural hazards can be broadened by consulting with fire departments, insurance companies, engineering consultants, and government departments.

### 6.1 Technological and natural hazards

Areas where flammables, explosives, or chemicals are used or stored should be considered as the most likely places for technological hazard emergencies to occur. Examples of these hazards are:

- fire;
- explosion;
- building collapse due to major structural failure;
- spills of flammable liquids;
- accidental release of toxic substances;
- deliberate release of hazardous biological agents or toxic chemicals and other terrorist activities;
- exposure to ionizing radiation;
- Major electrical power black-outs.

The risk from natural hazards is not the same across South Africa but the list could include:

- floods;
- severe wind storms;
- severe extremes in temperature (cold or hot); and
- pandemic diseases like influenza;
- Drought etc.

The possibility of one event triggering others must also be considered. For example, an explosion may start a fire and cause structural failure while an earthquake might initiate all the events noted in the list of chemical and physical hazards.

### 6.2 Emergency planning considerations

Having identified the hazards, the possible major impacts of each should be itemised, such as:

- sequential events (for example, fire after explosion);
- evacuation;
- casualties;
- damage to plant infrastructure;
- loss of vital records/documents;
- damage to equipment;



- Disruption of work/service/production.

Based on these events, the required actions are determined. For example:

- declare emergency;
- sound the alarm;
- evacuate danger zone;
- segregate the danger zone by securing main points of access;
- call for external assistance;
- initiate rescue operations;
- attend to casualties;
- Fight fire.

The final consideration is a list and the location of resources needed:

- medical supplies;
- auxiliary communication equipment (mobile radios etc.);
- portable generators;
- Personal Protective Equipment (respirators etc);
- chemical and radiation detection equipment;
- mobile equipment;
- firefighting equipment;
- ambulance;
- rescue equipment;
- Trained personnel.

## **7. ELEMENTS OF THE EMERGENCY PLAN**

The emergency plan must include:

- all possible emergencies, consequences, required actions, written procedures, and the resources available;
- detailed lists of emergency personnel including their home telephone numbers, their duties and responsibilities;
- floor plans, and
- large scale maps showing evacuation routes and service conduits (such as sewage gas and water lines).

Since a sizable document will likely result, the plan should provide emergency team members with written instructions detailing their particular emergency duties.

The following are examples of the elements of an emergency plan. These elements may not cover every situation in every workplace but serve as a general guideline when writing a workplace specific plan:

## 7.1 Objective

The objective is a brief summary of the intent of the plan; that is, to reduce human injury and damage to property in an emergency. It also specifies those staff members who may put the plan into action.

The objective identifies clearly who these staff members are since the normal chain of command cannot always be available on short notice. At least one of them must be on the site at all times during working hours. The extent of authority of these personnel must be clearly indicated.

## 7.2 Emergency Organisation

One individual should be appointed and trained to act as Emergency Co-ordinator as well as a "back-up" or Assistant Emergency Co-ordinator. However, personnel on the site during an emergency are key figures in ensuring that prompt and efficient action is taken to minimise potential loss. In some cases, it may be possible to recall off-duty employees to assist, but the critical initial decisions usually must be made immediately.

Specific duties, responsibilities, authority, and resources must be clearly defined. Among the responsibilities that must be assigned are:

- reporting the emergency;
- activating the emergency plan;
- assuming overall command;
- establishing emergency communication;
- alerting employees;
- ordering/instructing commencement of evacuation;
- alerting external agencies;
- confirm completion of evacuation phase;
- alerting outside population of possible risk/s;
- requesting external assistance;
- coordinating activities of various groups;
- advising relatives of casualties;
- providing medical aid;
- ensuring complete area of the emergency is segregated;
- sounding the all-clear alarm;
- advising media;

This list of responsibilities should be completed using the previously developed summary of counter-measures for each emergency situation. In organisations operating on reduced staff during some shifts, certain personnel must assume extra responsibilities during emergencies. Sufficient alternates for each responsible position must be named to ensure that someone with authority is available onsite at all times.

External organisations that may be available to assist (with varying response times) include:

- local authority fire departments;
- mobile rescue squads;

- ambulance services;
- police departments;
- telephone company;
- hospitals;
- utility companies;
- industrial neighbours;
- environmental clean-up contractors/agencies;
- Government agencies.

These organisations should be contacted in the planning stages to discuss each of their roles during an emergency. Mutual aid with other industrial facilities in the area should be explored and the required emergency agreements established.

Pre-planned coordination is necessary to avoid conflicting responsibilities. For example, the police, fire department, ambulance service, rescue squad, company fire brigade, and the first aid team may be on the scene simultaneously. A pre-determined chain of command in such a situation is required to avoid organisational difficulties. Under certain circumstances, an outside agency may learner activity command.

Efforts should be made to implement alternative means of communication during an emergency, especially between key personnel such as overall commander, on-scene commander, engineering, fire brigade, medical, rescue, and outside agencies. An example would be to allocate special radio frequencies for the duration of an emergency (from reporting of the emergency until all clear is sounded).

Depending on the size of the organisation and physical layout of the premises, it may be advisable to plan for an emergency control centre with alternate communication facilities. All personnel with alerting or reporting responsibilities must be provided with a current list of telephone numbers and addresses of those people they may have to contact.

### **7.3 Emergency procedures**

Many factors determine what procedures are needed in an emergency. These are:

- the severity of an emergency;
- the size of the organisation involved;
- the capabilities of the organisation to deal with an emergency situation;
- the proximity of outside assistance; and
- the physical layout of the premises.

Common elements to be considered in all emergencies include pre-emergency preparation and provisions for alerting and evacuating staff, handling and evacuation of casualties, and for containing of the emergency.

Natural hazards, such as floods or severe storms, often provide prior warning. The plan should take advantage of such warnings with, for example, instructions on sand bagging, removal of equipment to predetermined safe locations, providing alternate sources of electric

power, lighting and water, extra equipment, and relocation of personnel with specialised skills. Phased states of alert allow such measures to be initiated in an orderly manner.

The evacuation order is of greatest importance in alerting staff. To avoid confusion, only one type of signal should be used for the evacuation order throughout the organisation. Commonly used for this purpose are sirens, fire bells, whistles, flashing lights, paging system announcements, or word-of-mouth in noisy environments. The all-clear signal is less important since time is not such an urgent concern.

The following are "musts" in the event of emergency planning:

- identify evacuation routes; as well as alternate means of escape, make these known to all staff and keeping the routes unobstructed;
- Specify and indicate safe locations for staff to gather for head counts to ensure that everyone has left the danger zone. Assign individuals to assist handicapped employees during emergencies;
- carry out treatment of the injured and search for the missing simultaneously with efforts to contain the emergency;
- provide alternate sources of medical aid when normal facilities may be in the danger zone;
- Containing the extent of the property loss should begin only when the safety of all staff, neighbours and public at risk has been clearly established.

#### **7.4 Testing and Revision**

Completing a comprehensive plan for handling emergencies is a major step toward preventing disasters. However, it is difficult to predict all of the problems that may happen unless the plan is tested. Exercises and drills may be conducted to practice all or critical activities (such as evacuation) of the plan. These drills must be monitored and assessed by the Emergency Coordinator.

A thorough and immediate review after each exercise, drill, or after an actual emergency will indicate areas that require improvement. Knowledge of individual responsibilities can be evaluated through paper tests or interviews.

The plan must be revised on an annual basis and whenever shortcomings have been identified. Changes in plant infrastructure, processes, and materials used and key personnel are occasions for revising and updating of the plan.

It should be stressed that provision must be made for the training of both individuals and teams to ensure that they perform adequately in an emergency. An annual full-scale exercise will help in maintaining a high level of proficiency.






## 8. SAFETY SIGNS

Safety signs are used for specific purposes. If workers ignore these signs, it may result in emergency situations themselves. The important point to make here is to ensure that workers do not ignore safety signs during emergency situations.

Awareness and the meaning of safety signs are thus a crucial issue and must therefore be clearly communicated to all employees on a regular basis.

### 8.1 Warning signs

Warning signs are in the shape of a triangle and has a yellow background and black border. A pictograph representing any particular danger is displayed on the yellow background inside the black border.

SIGN TYPE	GEOMETRIC SHAPE	BACKGROUND COLOUR
WARNING		YELLOW
PROHIBITORY		WHITE
MANDATORY		BLUE
GENERAL INFORMATORY		GREEN
FIRE FIGHTING INFORMATORY		WHITE

### 8.2 Prohibitor Signs

Prohibitory Signs are in a circular shape with a white background and red border. A red “slash” through a pictograph indicates the prohibition within the context of the pictograph displayed on the sign.

### 8.3 Mandatory Signs

Mandatory signs are circular in shape and have a white pictograph which is displayed on a blue background.

### 8.4 General Information signs

General information signs have a green background with a white pictogram illustrating the information that is required to be conveyed.

### 8.5 Fire Information signs

Fire informatory signs have a white background and a red pictograph to illustrate the information required to be conveyed.

## 9. PLANNING TO DEAL EMERGENCY CONDITIONS/SITUATIONS

Remember that an emergency is a condition that occurs without prior notice. Emergencies thus usually come as “big surprises”. There is now clear-cut way to deal with any emergency but we can however plan ahead to ensure that personnel safety is addressed.

The best way in dealing with various emergencies is to develop scenarios that reflect conditions that have occurred elsewhere. The experiences of emergency personnel during such occurrences can then be simulated. In that way we can prepare for almost any occurrence with great accuracy.

### 9.1 Emergency scenarios

It is important to develop a scenario for each emergency that could occur in your area. Scenarios consist of the following elements:

#### 9.1.1 Normal condition

This element describes the situation/condition prior to the incident while all activities and operations are occurring as normal. This paragraph must preferably not exceed 100 words

#### 9.1.2 Emergency condition

In the work area which you are considering, list all the incidents that are possible to occur.

**NOTE:** Here it is important to consider **all** – and we mean **all** – possibilities (even ones with the most remote chances of realising) from a fire to and earth quake etc.

Arrange the list to illustrate the incidents in order from the most likely to the least likely to occur in the area that you work in. For instance, if there was no earth quake in your area for the past 100 years, this could possibly occupy the last position in your list.

Start your first scenario with the first emergency in the list. The second scenario will address the second emergency and so on.

#### 9.1.3 Events leading to the emergency/ incident

This part of the scenario will describe the detail of all the “things” that are considered to be factors that contribute towards the actual occurrence. This could include but is not limited to:

- Workplace Conditions;
- Environmental conditions;
- People behaviour;
- Etc.

#### 9.1.4 The occurrence of the emergency/ Incident

This part describes the incident in sequence with as much detail as possible. Remember that this part of the scenario will dictate the actions and resources that will be required to deal with the emergency effectively.

#### 9.1.5 Actions and resources required to deal with the incident effectively

The incident must be analysed and all the equipment and manpower that are required listed. Remember that this part of the scenario must include your action plan to evacuate the area/buildings. Consider the people with responsibilities e.g. first aiders and fire fighters etc.

#### 9.1.6 Normalisation of work area conditions

After the emergency condition has been successfully dealt with, it is necessary to normalise conditions. This could include actions such as giving the all-clear signal for re-occupation of the work area, clearing up of spillages etc.

**NOTE:** Repeat the scenario exercise for all the possible emergencies that was listed in paragraph 3.6.2 above.

Once all the scenarios are completed, they could be bound in a book form and all your evacuation exercises planned on random basis, using your scenarios.

### 9.2 Emergency Preparedness Procedures

Although there is no guideline prescribing the format and layout of Emergency Preparedness Procedures, it is generally structured in such a way that it provides the employees with all the relevant information necessary to deal with emergency conditions. However, the information contained in the Emergency Preparedness Procedures usually does not deal with all the emergency preparedness activities in detail.

It is therefore good practice to develop additional emergency procedures to address the various activities in more detail e.g., an emergency evacuation procedure, Establishment of emergency control centre etc.

Emergency procedures normally deal with a number of emergency issues over and above the procedures describing the emergency evacuation of employees from the danger areas. We will however only discuss issues that influence the duties and activities of Evacuation Officers.

### 9.3 The Emergency Organisation and associated responsibilities

The emergency response Teams are usually coordinated by an Emergency Coordinator. This person is in charge of the Evacuation Teams, Fire Teams and First Aid Teams. These teams work together to ensure a controlled and well organised evacuation in the event of an emergency. The Emergency Coordinator and his teams must evaluate the situation, make quick decisions and ensure the centralisation of all relative information.

The duties and responsibilities of emergency personnel may vary and this manual thus only provides guidelines.

Figure 1 below illustrates a typical command structure. Remember that command structures may change from industry to industry because their specific needs during emergency situations are different.

## **FIGURE 1: TYPICAL EMERGENCY COMMAND STRUCTURE**

The duties of certain emergency personnel are not discussed in this manual. Their omission from the manual does not suggest that they are considered to be less important.

### **10. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS PERTAINING TO EMERGENCY CONDITIONS**

#### **10.1 Fire Precautions and Means of Egress (Environmental Regulations for Workplaces Section 9)**

(1) In order to expedite the evacuation of a workplace in case of fire, every employer shall ensure that:

- (a) Any emergency escape door from any room or passage or at a staircase shall, as far as is practicable, be hung so as to open outwards;
- (b) every door of a room in which persons may be present, and every door of a passage or at a staircase serving as a means of exit from such room, shall be kept clear and capable of being easily and rapidly opened from inside so as to ensure quick and easy evacuation;
- (c) The provisions of paragraphs (a) and (b) shall also be complied with in respect of the outer escape exit from the workplace;
- (d) Staircases and steps leading from one floor to another or to the ground shall be provided with substantial hand-rails;
- (e) Staircases intended to be used as fire escapes shall:
  - (i) Be constructed of non-combustible material;
  - (ii) Be kept clear of any material or other obstruction; and
  - (iii) Not terminate in an enclosed area.
- (f) staircases, passages and exits intended for escape purposes shall be of a width and of a gradient which will facilitate the quick and safe egress of the number of persons intended to make use of them; and
- (g) Having regard to the size, construction and location of a workplace, the number of persons, and the activity therein, such workplace is provided with at least two means of egress situated as far apart as is practicable.



## **10.2 On site Emergency Plan (Major Hazard Installation Regulations Section 6)**

- (1) An employer, self-employed person and user shall after submission of the information of installation -
- (a) establish an on-site emergency plan to be followed inside the premises of the installation or part of the installation classified as a major hazard installation in consultation with the relevant health and safety representative or the relevant health and safety committee;
  - (b) Discuss the emergency plan with the relevant local government, taking into consideration any comment on the risk related to the health and safety of the public;
  - (c) Review the on-site emergency plan and, where necessary, update the plan, in consultation with the relevant local government, at least once every three years;
  - (d) Sign a copy of the on-site emergency plan in the presence of two witnesses, who shall attest the signature;
  - (e) Ensure that the on-site emergency plan in the presence of two witnesses, who shall attest the signature;
  - (f) Ensure that all employees are conversant with the on-site emergency plan; and
  - (g) Cause the on-site emergency plan to be tested in practice at least once a year and keep a record of such test.
- (2) Any employer, self-employed person and user owning or in control of a pipeline that could pose a threat to the general public shall inform the relevant local government and shall be jointly responsible with the relevant government for the establishment and implementation of an on-site emergency plan.
- (3) Sub regulation (1) shall not apply to rolling stock in transit: Provided that the operator of a railway shall -
- (a) Establish an emergency plan for each route traversed within 12 months of the coming into operation of these regulations;
  - (b) Draw up the plan contemplated in paragraph (a) in consultation with the local government through whose jurisdiction that rolling stock is being transported;
  - (c) Sign a copy of the on-site emergency plan in the presence of two witnesses, who shall attest the signature;
  - (d) Ensure that the plan is readily available at all times for implementation and use; and

- (e) Cause that plan to be tested when reasonably practicable and keep a record of such test.

## **11. IDENTIFICATION AND APPOINTMENT OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS OFFICIALS**

The command structure illustrated in Figure 1 shows all the role players required to make our emergency planning example manageable.

The appointment and responsibilities of each role player include, but are not limited to the following:

### **11.1 Head of Emergency Preparedness**

#### **Normal Duties:**

- 1) The development and implementation of an integrated Emergency Preparedness Programme;
- 2) Assures the availability of effective overall co-ordinated plans to ensure the contingency of the company and swift return to normal following an emergency;
- 3) Operates a system to ensure availability of effective plans by subordinate disciplines in support of the above;
- 4) Operates a system to ensure the availability of effective plans to obtain assistance from other parties.
- 5) Operates a system to ensure that company staff is competent to deal with Emergency situations;
- 6) Has regular environmental studies carried out regarding all aspects which could have an influence on the normal activities of the company. This will be done by liaison with external organisations and other departments as applicable.
- 7) Operates a system which ensures that Management Teams are familiar with Plans and the responsibilities of the individual members and that Emergency Preparedness are incorporated into their various job output models e.g. Protective Services;

#### **Duties during an Emergency:**

- 1) Responsible for initiating and directing action in the Emergency Centre.
- 2) To communicate the Emergency situation to the following:  
Emergency Preparedness Committee, Executive Director / Senior General Manager, Emergency Preparedness Centre, Media, Local Authorities and Protection Authorities.

### **11.2 Deputy Head of Emergency Preparedness**

#### **Normal Duties:**

Assist the Head of Emergency Preparedness with:

The development and implementation of an integrated Emergency Preparedness Programme;

- 1) Assures the availability of effective overall co-ordinated plans to ensure the contingency of the company and swift return to normal following an emergency;
- 2) Operates a system to ensure availability of effective plans by subordinate disciplines in support of the above;
- 3) Operates a system to ensure the availability of effective plans to obtain assistance from other parties.
- 4) Operates a system to ensure that company staff is competent to deal with Emergency situations;
- 5) Has regular environmental studies carried out regarding all aspects which could have an influence on the normal activities of the company. This will be done by liaison with external organisations and other departments as applicable.
- 6) Operates a system which ensures that Management Teams are familiar with Plans and the responsibilities of the individual members and that Emergency Preparedness are incorporated into their various job output models e.g. Protective Services;

**Duties during an Emergency:**

- 1) Co-Responsible for initiating and directing action in the Emergency Centre.
- 2) To communicate the Emergency situation to the following:  
Emergency Preparedness Committee, Executive Director / Senior General Manager,  
Emergency Preparedness Centre, Media, Local Authorities and Protection Authorities.

**11.3 Administrative Coordinator**

**Normal Duties:**

Ensures that all logistical arrangement