

Safety Matters

Emergency Evacuation

Each year, emergencies take their toll on business and industry – in lives and dollars. But something can be done. You can limit injuries and damages and return more quickly to normal operations if you have an emergency action plan in place.

Emergency action plans will guide you in assigning responsibilities and procedures when responding to fire, chemical, weather, utility, and medical emergencies. It will further assist you in developing preventative actions. Your first priority – whether you operate from a high-rise building or an industrial complex, whether you own, rent, or lease your property, whether you are a large or small company – is to protect the health and safety of everyone in your facility. One common means of protection is through the use of an evacuation plan.

If you already have an evacuation plan, now is a good time for a review. Buildings and layouts can change. Make certain your plan has accommodated any changes. If you don't have a formal plan, we urge you to develop one. Plans compel you to think through the best course of action in an emergency situation. Here are some items that should be included when developing your plan:

- Ø Determine conditions under which an evacuation would be necessary.
- Ø Establish a clear chain of command.
- Ø Designate who has the authority to order an evacuation.
- Ø Account for the evacuated. Obtaining an accurate account of personnel after a site evacuation requires planning and practice.
- Ø Designate specific areas where personnel should gather after evacuating. Take a head count.
- Ø List the names and last known location of personnel not accounted for. Confusion in the assembly areas can lead to unnecessary and dangerous search and rescue operations.
- Ø Establish procedures for assisting non-English speaking people and those with disabilities.
- Ø Post evacuation procedures and clearly identify primary and secondary escape routes.
- Ø Conduct training. Failing to practice can undermine even the best plans. Practice increases the likelihood of a confident and orderly evacuation.
- Ø Coordinate plans with your local emergency management office.

The details involved in evacuation planning range from major to minor, but decisions have to be made, written down, presented, and practiced regularly. Employees need to know what to do, and know it so well that they can put the plan into action even when they are rattled. Being prepared for a catastrophe lessens the potential for injury, lost lives, and property damage. Contact your Sylvia Group Representative at (508) 994-4553 for further information and assistance in establishing an effective emergency evacuation plan.