

# Emergency preparedness issues for hospitals

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# **OSHA's mission**

**To protect workers' safety and health**

# Our toolbox

- ❖ **Enforcement**
- ❖ **Consultation**
- ❖ **Outreach, training, and education**
- ❖ **Partnership and cooperative programs**

# OSHA's role in emergency management

- ❖ OSH Act requires employers to protect employees from workplace hazards
- ❖ OSHA has assigned duties under the Federal Response Plan

# Workplace hazards – Emergencies and developing trends

- WTC (tenants and responders)
- Anthrax (USPS, media outlets, responders)
- SARS (healthcare workers)
- The Station night club

# What is a workplace emergency?

Fire

Severe weather

Hurricane

Building collapse

Explosion

Civil disturbance

Toxic gas release

Flood

Tornado

Workplace violence

Terrorism

Radiological incident

Chemical spill

Technological or transportation incident

# How should you protect your employees and your business?

- Pre-plan
- Pre-plan
- Pre-plan
- Conduct a hazard- or threat-assessment
- Brainstorm
  - Possible scenarios
  - Worst-case
  - Most likely
- Consider
  - History
  - Environment
  - Topography
  - Nearby transportation and facilities
  - Weather and climate

# Why is it so important to plan?

- Hospitals are part of the **critical infrastructure**, but their design and nature make them a **soft target**.
- Coordinate with local officials
  - Expectations
  - Hazard analysis
  - Community and other resources
- Reduce the need for on-the-spot decision making



# Implement an **emergency action plan**

- Required by OSHA under certain circumstances
- Recommended in all cases
- Consider involving management and employees in the development process
- Goal is to protect life and minimize property damage

# What must an **emergency action plan** include?

- Preferred means for reporting fires and other emergencies
- Evacuation policy and procedures
- Emergency escape procedures and routes
  - Floor plans, maps, areas of refuge
- Name, title, contacts for additional information

# What must an **emergency action plan** include?

- Critical operation shut-down procedures
- Fire-fighting or other essential services
- Rescue and medical duties
- Also recommended:
  - Assembly area
  - Accountability procedures
  - Alternative communication center
  - Document management and data backup

# When should you evacuate?

- Designated person should make the decision
  - *Protecting health and safety is first priority*
- Some emergencies warrant immediate action
  - Example: fires
- In other emergencies, it may be advisable to stay in a protected area
  - Example: Toxic gas release in neighborhood

# When should you evacuate?

- Local emergency officials may order, request, or recommend certain actions
  - Follow instructions for securing the premises, evacuation routes, and shelter / assembly areas
- Natural disasters (eg., hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes) may warrant a different response
- Consider structural stability following earthquakes, explosions, or collapses

# How do you establish evacuation routes and exits?

- Designate primary and secondary (backup) routes and exits
  - Clearly marked and well lit
  - Wide enough to accommodate personnel
  - Unobstructed and clear of debris
  - Unlikely to expose personnel to additional hazards
  - Have employees move away from the affected building
    - Do not congregate near exit discharge or where they may hamper emergency operations
- If drawings are used, post them prominently

# How do you account for employees after an evacuation?

- Avoid delays in rescue, or unnecessary searches
- Designate assembly areas
- Take a head count
  - Identify names and last-known location for anyone not accounted for
- Establish a method for non-employees
  - Suppliers, customers, other visitors
- Procedures if incident expands

# What type of training do employees need?

- Types of emergencies that may occur
- Proper course of action in response
- Size of workplace and workforce, processes and materials, level of on-site and off-site resources will determine level of training
- Address any special hazards
- Clearly communicate who is in charge



# What type of training do employees need?

- General guidance:
  - Individual roles and responsibilities
  - Threats, hazards, and protective actions
  - Notification, warning, and communication
  - Emergency response procedures
  - Evacuation, shelter, accountability procedures
  - Location and use of emergency equipment
  - Emergency shut-down procedures

# What type of training do employees need?

- Consider:
  - First-aid & CPR
    - including bloodborne pathogen protection
  - Respiratory protection
    - Emergency escape-only respirators
  - Methods to prevent unauthorized access
- Consider holding drills or exercises
  - Coordinate with outside resources
  - Critique each drill

# How often do you need to train your employees?

- When plan is initially developed
- When new employees are hired
- When new equipment, materials, or processes are introduced
- When facility design or layout change
- When plan is updated or revised
- Consider annual training

# What about hazardous substances?

- Source could be internal to plant or facility
- Source could be external
  - Neighboring plant or facility
  - Transportation accident
- If chemicals are used, employer must comply with 1910.1200 (hazard communication)
  - Consult with MSDSs for planning and guidance

# What special equipment should you provide?

- Personal protective equipment appropriate for the hazards present
  - Conduct a hazard assessment
  - Consider eyes and face; head; extremities, hands, feet; chemical protection; respiratory protection; temperature extremes
- Other special equipment or warning devices necessary for unique hazards at each worksite

# What are some unique issues for hospitals?

- “First Receivers” for victims
- Decontamination
  - Gross? Secondary?
- Hazard analysis and risk assessment
- PPE selection
  - Ability to perform patient care; Appropriate to risk, no greater hazard; User acceptance, training, and familiarity; Medical surveillance and fit testing; Readiness for use
- Integration in Incident Command System

# What about terrorism or acts of violence?

- Deliberate action
- May cause any other type of emergency
- May sabotage or affect other systems, such as blocking egress routes, ventilation, etc.
- Workplace violence
  - Different types, based on perpetrator
  - Implement effective countermeasures – training, access control, visibility, etc.
  - Plan for incident response

# OSHA resources

- Compliance assistance
- Technical support
- Consultation service
- Publications, tools, standards
- Internet and electronic resources





**Occupational Safety and  
Health Administration**