

How to  
***Prepare*** your  
***Workplace*** for any  
***Emergency***



# Contents



**Why Prepare Now? 2**



**How Do I Start? 2**



**Creating the Basics for  
Your Emergency Action Plan**



**Building On the Basics 4**



**Disaster-Specific Plans**

- Earthquakes
- Tropical Storm, Thunderstorm, Tornado
- Winter Storms
- Fires
- Floods
- Hazardous Material Incidents
- Explosions
- Civil Disturbances
- Workplace Violence
- Extended Power Outage



**Additional Planning**



**We have a Plan and  
Supplies. Now What? 7**



**Evaluate and Improve**

Being prepared for disasters and emergencies is becoming more and more important— not just for home and family, but for the office and workplace as well. Whether the emergency requires immediate evacuation from the office, or prevents employees from returning home first responders may not be able to offer help and assistance right away. It may take time for help to reach you. That wait makes it vitally important for offices and business to prepare their own emergency action plan (EAP).

## Why Prepare Now?

Having a plan for disasters and emergency situations is one important and beneficial step for any business or company that is often overlooked. An Emergency Action Plan helps companies to be prepared for a variety of disasters that could otherwise be detrimental to the growth and even survival of a business. According to the American Red Cross, **between 15 and 40 percent of businesses fail following a natural or man made disaster**. In addition, 94 percent of small business owners believe a disaster could seriously disrupt their business. Even more shocking statistics come from government agencies. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) **40 percent of businesses do not reopen after a disaster and another 25 percent fail within one year**. Similar statistics from the United States Small Business Administration indicate that over 90 percent of businesses fail within two years after being struck by a disaster.

Planning ahead to prepare a plan for potential disasters significantly reduces risks to a business and decreases the time it would take a business to recuperate from any disaster. In addition to being beneficial for a business's bottom line, a plan is beneficial for employees. Having a well communicated plan helps to reduce confusion and injury during an emergency in order to keep your employees safe. Communicating this plan well also communicates the value and appreciation you have for your employees. Creating

a plan and meeting requirements for an Emergency Action Plan is not as difficult and time consuming as you might think, not to mention it could end up being very beneficial for your business. This guide will walk you through the process of creating a plan and picking which supplies would be beneficial for your business to have.

This article will guide you through:

- Different emergency situations a workplace may encounter
- How to economically develop a plan and a kit for your workplace according to your needs
- How to implement and reevaluate your plan for improvement

## How Do I Start?

A well-thought-out emergency action plan is the best way to protect a business, its assets, and its employees. In order to create effective and useful plans and kits for a business, it is important to tailor that plan to the needs of a business and its employees. With that in mind, what are workplace emergencies and which are more likely to affect your business?

The guide, *How to Plan for Workplace Emergencies and Evacuations* released by the U.S. Department of Labor defines a workplace emergency as “an unforeseen situation that threatens your employees, customers, or the public; disrupts or shuts down your operations; or causes physical or environmental damage. Emergencies may be natural or man made” The definition covers a wide variety of emergencies you may or may not have already begun thinking about.

You may be wondering which disasters are most common, which should you most be concerned about for your business and employees.

*Continued on p.5*



# Disaster Stats 2010-2020

## United States Yearly Averages

The height of a wedge represents the number of fatalities, while the area of its top face indicates estimated monetary losses. The wider angled sectors indicate the number of events. \* These three dimensions create a visual "severity index." In layman's terms, the bigger the wedge, the worse the disasters of that type were in these years.

\* An "event" here means a catastrophe causing 25 million dollars or more in a single instance. No event data for 2010-2011. Averages used.



### Tropical Cyclones

**Average Event Count:** 4  
**Average Fatalities:** 52  
**Average Losses:** 24 Billion  
The graphic shows how hurricanes

cause damage disproportionate to their number. In 2017, hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria caused 123 billion dollars in damage.



### Convective Sorms

**Average Events:** 59  
**Average Fatalities:** 135  
**Average Losses:** 25.4 Billion  
The 2011 Super Outbreak of tornadoes was the worst year in this data.



### Winter Storms/ Cold Waves

**Average Events:** 10  
**Average Fatalities:** 24  
**Average Losses:** 3 Billion

The 2014 and 2015 nor'easters dumped several feet of snow on the east coast.



### Floods/Flash Floods

**Events:** 12  
**Fatalities:** 14  
**Overall Losses:** 4.2 Billion

Historic floods of 2015 and the 2016 Louisiana floods lead this data.



### Wildfire, Heatwaves, and Drought

**Average Events:** 17  
**Average Fatalities:** 30  
**Average Losses:** 8.6 Billion

Wildfires are increasing in frequency and size across the western U.S.



### Earthquakes and Geophysical

**Average Events:** 3  
**Average Fatalities:** 5  
**Average Losses:** 186 Million

There is a serious possibility of a major quake along the Pacific in the next several decades. Globally, earthquakes and landslides are catastrophic.



There are two main types of disasters, natural and man made. The United States is second in the world in natural disaster occurrences, this is due to both geographical positioning and geographical size of the United States. While not an all-inclusive list, below are ten of the more common workplace emergencies to consider in your EAP.

- Earthquake
- Tropical Storm, Thunderstorm, Tornado
- Winter Storms
- Fires
- Hazardous Material Incidents
- Explosions
- Civil Disturbances
- Workplace Violence
- Floods
- Extended Power Outage

Take some time to consider this list. Find out which possible disasters would be more likely to happen to you, your business, and your employees. There are a few reasons to start by forming a short list of the emergencies most vital for your business to prepare for. First, you will be able to create a personalized plan that addresses the concerns of disasters relevant to you and your business. Second, it will save you time and money when preparing a plan and a kit, because the plan and kit that you build for your business will have the scenarios and items needed for disasters relevant to you.

One key to a well-implemented plan of any kind is the execution of that plan; and that begins with leadership. Before creating your plan, another consideration is who will be in charge of overseeing the plan's creation, communication, and execution during a real emergency. This could range from one person— perhaps the manager— to a small team that oversees the communication/ training of the plan. For a larger company, it can be beneficial to have a small team create a plan that is delegated to area managers so that during an emergency there will several people responsible for smaller groups.

## Creating the Basics for Your Emergency Action Plan


There are two important components to a successful action plan: the written plan and physical supplies. The written plan is a great place to start, but incorporating your physical supplies into that plan is also important as you go along. This way, any instructions (for example fire extinguishers) or locations to supplies (such as food, water, or other emergency supplies) can be included in the action plan.


Let's start with some basic elements to an emergency plan. The United States Department of Labor (OSHA) has a great list of


suggestions that can provide a basic structure for your business's emergency action plan. While this is a great place to start, they are just the basics; and continued thought and development into your plan and supplies will be beneficial.


But let's start the basics from OSHA.


At minimum, your Emergency Action Plan should include:


 **A means of reporting fires and other emergencies.** This can include phone numbers of emergency services, locations of fire alarms, and any numbers of internal emergency services if that is applicable to your company.

 **Evacuation procedures and emergency escape route assignments.** These describe under what circumstances are employees to evacuate, who is authorized to order an evacuation, and the plan for evacuation.

 **Procedures for employees who remain for critical operations before evacuation.** This could include how to operate fire extinguishers and hoses in the building, activating alarm systems, or proper shutdown procedures for hazardous equipment.

 **A way to account for all employees after an emergency evacuation.** This could include someone assigned to sweep areas, checking all offices, restrooms, and other rooms before being the last to leave. And/or performing a roll call in the designated evacuation assembly area.

 **Rescue and medical duties for employees performing them.** A small organization will usually rely on local emergency services to provide these services.

 **Names or job titles of persons who can be contacted** Names, titles, departments, and numbers of employees who can be contacted for more information and/or description of duties under the plan.

That's a pretty easy and straightforward way to begin your EAP. It is also very easy to build off of that structure to expand and enhance your plan to make it even more useful and specific to your company needs.

## Building On the Basics

### Disaster-Specific Plans

The next step is to evaluate the list you made of potential disasters your company may face. Each potential disaster has a unique set of circumstances to prepare for. This disaster information will help you to see what supplies would be most beneficial for your workplace, and what instructions you should include in your written plan.



## Earthquakes

An Earthquake is a sudden release of energy in the Earth's crust that releases seismic waves. This is felt as an intense shaking or slippage of the ground. Earthquakes occur along fault lines. To start, find out if your business is located anywhere near a fault line, and find out any seismic history in your area. The main concern for safety during this disaster is not the earthquake itself, but the collapsing buildings and the aftermath of the earthquake: falling objects, or damaged gas and power lines.

- Assign one or more employees to be in charge of shutting off gas, electricity, and water mains where applicable in your building. Include instructions and locations in your emergency plan to turn off gas, water, and power as an added precaution.
- Check for tall objects, or objects placed on high shelves that could fall during an earthquake. Try and place these objects in places that are not in walkways or close to employee workstations to avoid harm from falling.
- Train employees to duck and cover during an earthquake, find cover under a desk or doorway, and conduct earthquake drills.
- There is a high chance that there will be dust and debris in the air, consider having enough N95 masks for all your employees, flashlights, and a first aid kit in your emergency supplies. Consider also having a crowbar and 4 in 1 disaster tool in case you will need to move objects to get out or help trapped coworkers.
- After an earthquake, listen the radio or look for updates from emergency services online to know if you should evacuate the area or if it is okay to stay put, in addition to evaluating the stability of the building you are in.



## Tropical Storm, Thunderstorm, Tornado

Most storms are quite harmless, but tropical storms can become very dangerous with risks of flooding, intense winds, and hurricanes. In addition to thunderstorms and tropical storms, Tornadoes may be a risk in your area. Find out the storm history in your area to know which storms you may need to prepare for.

- In many cases, you may be warned ahead a time of incoming storms; but, sometimes— especially with tornadoes— the warning may only be a few minutes.
- Assign and train employees to turn off water, electricity, and gas lines. Include instructions in your emergency plan as well. If you have time to do so safely, turn off these utilities before the storm hits.
- Keep important documents in waterproof bags or saved on a remote database in case of water damage.
- Listen to a weather broadcast to follow instructions from emergency services. Consider having enough rain ponchos,

masks, and goggles for your employees on hand. Consider also having potty box or honey bucket set, flashlights, food and water rations (1 gallon per person per day of water), pry bar, and 4 in 1 disaster tool in your emergency supplies.



## Winter Storms

Winter storms are usually harmless to those not out on the road— unless you are stuck without electricity or heat. Pay attention to storm warnings and consider the safety of your employees. If you are snowed in at work, consider how to keep your employees safe.

- Seal off unused rooms to conserve energy and heat, close doors and use plastic sheets. Move employees together into as few rooms as possible to stay warm
- Consider including in your emergency kit enough emergency blankets, food rations, and enough water for all of your employees (1 gallon per person per day)
- Consider also having hand warmers, candles, matches, flashlights, an emergency toilet set, plastic sheets, and duct tape in your emergency supplies as well.



## Fires

Fires aren't as widespread of disasters, but are much more common and should be planned for in your Emergency Action Plan. Include evacuation plans and locations and instructions for fire extinguishers/hoses. Check any fire detectors regularly

- In case of fire, evacuate and contact local emergency services (911). Unless it is a fire small enough to put out with a fire extinguisher do not risk your own safety attempting to put it out.
- Consider also having masks for all employees and a crowbar in your emergency kit.



## Floods

Floods can come from many different sources, such as rainfall, tsunamis, hurricanes, broken dams, etc. It may surprise you to learn that you could be based in a flood zone. Pay attention to weather reports in order to have plenty of forewarning. Weather reports give flood watches and warnings. A **watch** means a flood is possible, while a **warning** means a flood will soon start or already has.

- Assign and train employees to turn off water, electricity, and gas lines. Include instructions in your emergency plan as well. If you have time to do so safely turn off these utilities before the flood hits.
- During a flood, get to higher ground. This may include getting higher up in the building you are located in.
- Do not leave or move until you are sure it's safe to do so.

- Avoid touching flood water, not only will it be contaminated, but just 6 inches of moving flood water can knock you over.
- Consider having an NOAA weather radio, flashlights, emergency toilet set, 4 in 1 disaster tool, crowbar, plastic sheets, and rain ponchos in your emergency supplies.



## Hazardous Material Incidents

A variety of chemicals are around us every day; many of them can potentially harmful if used or released unsafely or in large amounts. These accidents most commonly occur in shipping or a plant accident.

- Prepare emergency supplies needed. Include plastic sheeting and duct tape, food and water, flashlights with batteries, and a radio that is either battery or hand crank operated.
- If the accident occurs in your plant or place of work, immediately notify local authorities and emergency services, then safely evacuate the area.
- If the accident occurs near your place of work, you may be asked to evacuate. Listen to the radio and local authorities for instructions on whether to evacuate or stay put
- If asked to evacuate, follow premade plans to evacuate the building and listen to local authorities' recommended routes
- If asked to stay put, group your employees into as few rooms as possible, have your emergency supplies with you, and seal off any doorways and windows with the plastic sheeting; then listen for further instructions.



## Explosions

Explosions can come from accidents to intentional bombings. If you receive a telephoned bomb threat, get as much information from the caller as you can: "Where is it?", "What does it look like?," and "Did you place the bomb?" are all good questions. Record everything and immediately contact the police. Be vigilant for suspicious individuals and packages as well. Watch for unexpected packages, and packages with no return address or labels not matching the return address.

- Have a first aid kit in your supplies and consider adding flashlights, food and water storage (1 gallon per person per day of water), N95 masks, 4 in 1 disaster tool, and a crowbar.
- In an explosion, get underneath something, such as a desk, until debris stops falling, then evacuate the building, stay low if there is smoke. Try and wear a mask to avoid breathing in smoke and debris, or cover your mouth and nose with something else. Make sure that employees congregate away from sidewalks that will be used by emergency personnel.
- If you are trapped signal using a flashlight or by hitting pipes or walls with something to make noise.



## Civil Disturbances

There is a small chance that a person or group of people may, in a public place, commit violent or dangerous acts that threaten everyone's life and safety. Contact emergency services if this is happening near your place of work, listen for instructions either over the phone, on the internet, or on the radio. Don't leave unless you know it is safe to do so.

- Lock and potentially barricade any doors or windows on the main floor. Stay away from windows.
- Find a location in your building you could perform a lockdown, preferably in rooms with one door and no windows. Turn out the lights and lock the doors.
- Take any emergency supplies with you.
- Consider keeping an emergency toilet, flashlights, radio, emergency blankets, food, and water rations (1 gallon per person per day)



## Workplace Violence

Workplace violence according to the Department of Justice is in steady decline; nonetheless, this is something that can be valuable for businesses to plan for. This could include someone coming onto the workplace with a knife or gun, or bomb, in addition to a possible employee. In these situations it is important to stay calm.

- If you are being held as a hostage it is usually best to do what the person posing a threat says.
- If you are away of the danger and not held as a hostage, try and get to a safe place as quickly and quietly as possible, preferably a room with no windows. Close and lock the door, turn the light out, and stay out of view from any windows if there are any.
- Notify emergency services immediately of the situation (911).
- Do not attempt to confront the intruder except as a last resort.



## Extended Power Outage

For the most part, power outages are relatively easy to handle. Power is usually restored very quickly. If power is out for an extended time it still may be safe enough to work, or for your employees to return home. Listen to emergency services either online or through a portable radio for any instructions to stay put. You may want to consider supplies to have on hand in case of an extended need to shelter in.

- Unplug all electronics to avoid a power surge when the electricity is restored.
- Consider having food rations, water (1 gallon per person per day), flashlights, dynamo or battery powered radio and phone charger, and emergency blankets.

## Additional Planning

You might also consider other training that could be beneficial for your employees, from basic self defense to CPR and basic first aid training. Knowledge combined with a plan and materials can take a certain disaster and turn it into a much more manageable situation.

As you write your plan down, consider what items you want to put together into an emergency supply kit. Consider needs in both evacuation and sheltering in place. Needs that you and your employees may encounter include, food rations, water (emergency water rations, water storage containers, water purification kits), warmth (ponchos, emergency blankets), light (dynamo or battery powered flashlights, candles), communication (dynamo or battery powered radio and phone charger), hygiene (emergency toilet sets, hand sanitizer, toilet gel, Eco gel), and first aid. Your supplies should be compact and easy to grab. A good place to store your supplies is in a 5 gallon bucket, which can double as an emergency toilet when needed. Keep them in an easy to access place as well.

Using your list of potential disasters, you can build your own kit from scratch. Included are some suggestions we feel are good to think about in each potential disaster. You might also want to check out some of the emergency office kits that are available for purchase. This can often be an economical way to prepare your office with everything you need to begin. Look around and price compare, as well as comparing the contents inside of the kits. All kits are not created equal, and it's important to get the best kit for the money you will be spending.

Make sure to include the location of your supplies and basic instructions about them in your action plan.

## We have a Plan and Supplies. Now What?

Now that you have written down your plan and have started your emergency supply the next step is implementing that plan you have created.

It is important that all employees are made aware of the plan and procedures within the plan so that in an emergency everything runs as smoothly as possible. The committee or team in charge of creating and implementing the plan can conduct a short training to introduce the plan, distribute copies of the plan, and conduct varying drills to practice what to do during an emergency. Muscle memory is an effective way to teach.

Also be aware that new employees will need to be trained as well this can also be done by the team or committee in charge of the emergency action plan.

Make sure employees are aware of the supplies and know where they are located, and understand how to use equipment such as a fire extinguisher if included in your supplies.

## Evaluate and Improve

You are now well on your way to keeping your employees and business more safe and secure during a disaster. It's not over even after implementation though. Through drills, practice, and continued thought, you will find ways your plan can be improved (or perhaps more supplies added to your kit). Make sure to keep anything with expiration dates rotated (such as food, water, batteries, and some first aid supplies), so as to have things ready to use when they are actually needed.