

A silhouette of a worker in a hard hat and safety harness is perched on a tall, complex metal lattice structure, possibly a tower or crane. The background is a bright, hazy orange, suggesting a fire or a high-temperature environment. The worker is positioned on the left side of the frame, looking towards the right.

Workplace Disasters Avoid Panic, Plan Ahead

Nobody expects an emergency or disaster, yet the simple truth is that emergencies and disasters can strike anytime and anywhere. The best way to protect yourself, your employees, and your business is to develop an emergency-response plan before an emergency occurs.

Consider All the Possibilities

You can easily put together a comprehensive emergency-response plan that highlights all types of potential emergencies:

- Floods,
- Earthquakes,
- Hurricanes,
- Tornadoes,
- Fires,
- Toxic gas releases,
- Chemical spills,
- Hazardous substances,
- Radiological accidents,
- Explosions,
- Civil disturbances, and
- Workplace violence.

Get Everyone Involved in Emergency Planning

An emergency-response plan outlines the procedures to be carried out when an emergency occurs. Your management team and employees should be included in planning, developing, and implementing your emergency-response plan. The plan should include the following:

- Methods for reporting emergencies;
- Evacuation policies;
- Emergency escape procedures and route assignments, such as floor plans, workplace maps, and safe or refuge areas;
- Names, titles, departments and telephone numbers of individuals both within and outside your company to contact for additional information or explanation of duties and responsibilities;
- Procedures for employees who remain to perform or shut down critical plant operations, operate fire extinguishers, or perform other essential services before evacuating;
- Rescue and medical duties for designated individuals;
- An assembly location and procedures to account for employees following evacuation;
- The site of an alternative communications center to be used in the event of a fire or explosion; and
- A secured on- or off-site location to store originals or duplicate copies of accounting records, legal documents, employees' emergency contact lists, and other essential records.

When preparing your emergency-response plan, formulate evacuation procedures. A disorganized evacuation can result in confusion, injury, and property damage. When developing these procedures consider the following:

- Conditions under which an evacuation would be necessary;
- A clear chain of command and designation of the person authorized to order an evacuation or shut-down;
- Evacuation routes and exits (Post these procedures where they are easily accessible to all employees);
- Clearly marked and unobstructed routes and exits that are wide enough to accommodate evacuating personnel;
- Procedures for assisting people with special needs (e.g., disabilities or inability to speak English); and
- Designation of which employees, if any, will continue or shut down critical operations during an evacuation.

Name a Leader, Build a Team

Select a responsible individual to lead and coordinate the evacuation plan. The coordinator should be responsible for the following:

- Assessing the situation to determine whether an emergency requires activating emergency procedures,
- Supervising all efforts in the area, including evacuating personnel,
- Coordinating outside emergency services, such as medical aid and local fire departments, and
- Directing the shutdown of plant operations when required.

Your inability to properly alert employees in the event of an evacuation may result in serious injuries or fatalities.

In addition to a coordinator, you may want to designate others to help move employees to safety. Those designated to assist in emergencies should be aware of individuals with special needs who require extra assistance, how to use the buddy system, and hazardous areas to avoid during an emergency evacuation.

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To alert employees,

- Make sure alarms are recognized as a signal to evacuate the work area or perform identified

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Workplace Emergencies

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actions;

- Make available an emergency communications system such as a public address system, portable radio unit, or other means to notify employees of the emergency and to contact local law enforcement, the fire department, etc.; and
- Ensure that alarms can be heard, seen, or otherwise perceived by everyone in the workplace. Consider an auxiliary power supply in the event that electricity is shut off.

In the event of emergency, local officials may order you to evacuate your premises. In some cases, they may instruct you to shut off the water, gas, and electricity. If you have access to radio or television, listen to newscasts and follow official orders.

If an evacuation is ordered, accounting for all employees is critical. Confusion in assembly areas can lead to delays in rescuing anyone trapped in the building or to unnecessary and dangerous search-and-rescue operations. These actions will help ensure the fastest, most accurate accountability of your employees:

- Designate assembly areas where employees should gather;
- Take a head count after the evacuation, identify the names and last known locations of anyone not accounted for, and pass them to the official in charge;
- Establish a method for accounting for non-employees (e.g., suppliers and customers); and
- Implement procedures for further evacuation in case the incident expands. This may require sending employees home by normal means or providing them with transportation to an off-site location.

Training and Practice Are Keys to Effectiveness

Educate your employees about the types of emergencies that may occur and provide emergency-response training on how they are expected to respond. Determine your training requirements by the size of your workplace and workforce, processes used, materials handled, and the availability of on-site or outside resources. Review the plan with all your employees, and consider additional training when

- New employees are hired,
- New equipment, materials, or processes are introduced into the workplace, and
- Layout or design of the facility changes.

Ensure that your employees understand the functions and elements of your emergency-response plan, including types of potential emergencies, reporting procedures, alarm systems, evacuation plans, and shutdown procedures.

Once employees have been trained, hold practice drills. Whenever possible, include outside resources, such as fire and police departments. After each drill, gather management and employees to evaluate its effectiveness. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of your plan, and make improvements as needed.

Even if your business is properly prepared for an emergency, injuries may still occur. Investigate ways to provide medical and first-aid services, and make arrangements with nearby medical facilities. If an infirmary, clinic or hospital is not close by, ensure that an on-site person or people have adequate training in first aid. The American Red Cross, local safety councils, fire departments, or other resources can provide training.

Consult with a physician to order appropriate first-aid supplies for emergencies. Medical personnel must be accessible to provide advice and consultation in resolving health problems in the workplace.

OSHA provides resources that can help you formulate your emergency-response plan, including 29 CFR 1910.38(a), 29 CFR 1910.120(q), Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response; 29 CFR 1910.156, Fire Brigades; and 29 CFR 1910.146(k), Permit-Required Confined Spaces. OSHA Publication 3122, Principal Emergency Response and Preparedness Requirements in OSHA Standards and Guidance for Safety and Health Problems, provides a broad view of emergency planning requirements across OSHA standards. Visit www.osha.gov for more information.

For more information on this topic, contact Doug Austin, CPCU of the Sentry Insurance Group, at (715) 246-6876 or doug.austin@sentry.com.

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AGMA Partners with Sentry Insurance

AGMA is partnering with Sentry Insurance to help your company save on workers compensation, property and casualty insurance. This can include commercial liability, comprehensive automobile liability and physical damage, and crime and dishonesty coverage. One of the primary reasons the AGMA Board of Directors selected Sentry Insurance for this relationship is that metalworking is one of the six “focus markets” on which Sentry concentrates. Because they know your business better than most insurers, Sentry can offer more customized packages to AGMA members.

AGMA encourages you to have at least one conversation with Sentry to determine how you might benefit from this new relationship. For more information, email Joe Franklin at franklin@agma.org or contact Doug Austin CPCU at (715) 346-6876 or doug.austin@sentry.com.

AGMA Calendar

September 25	Fine-Pitch Gearing Committee	Seekonk, Mass.
September 26-27	Future Leaders Council	Rockford, Ill.
September 26-27	Plastics Gearing Committee	Seekonk, Mass.
September 26-27	Wormgearing Committee	Chicago, Ill.
October 2-3	Regional Meeting—Gear Accuracy Standards	Cleveland, Ohio
October 3-4	Industrial Enclosed Drive Committee	Milwaukee, Wis.
October 4-6	Helical Gear Rating Committee	Detroit, Mich.
October 12	Epicyclic Enclosed Drive Committee	Chicago, Ill.
October 11-13	Detailed Gear Design Seminar	Concordville, Pa.
October 17-18	Small Business Council	Rosemont, Ill.
October 18-20	ISO/IEC Joint Working Group (Wind Turbines)	Orlando, Fla.
October 19-20	Bevel Gearing Committee	Orlando, Fla.
October 22-24	Fall Technical Meeting	Orlando, Fla.
October 24	Finance Committee	Orlando, Fla.
October 24	Executive Committee	Orlando, Fla.
October 24	Board of Directors	Orlando, Fla.
October 25-26	Strategic Planning Committee	Orlando, Fla.
October 25-26	Flexible Couplings Committee	Orlando, Fla.
October 25	ISO TC 60 Working Group 6 (Gear Rating)	Orlando, Fla.
October 26	ISO TC 60 Working Group 7 (Wormgearing)	Orlando, Fla.
November 8	Statistical Council	Rosemont, Ill.
November 8	Business Management Executive Committee	Rosemont, Ill.
November 8-9	Marketing Council	Rosemont, Ill.
November 9-10	Cutting Tools Committee	Alexandria, Va.
November 9-10	Powder Metallurgy Gearing Committee	Dayton, Ohio
November 13-15	Computer Programming Committee	Denver, Colo.
November 14	Marine Enclosed Drive Committee	Chicago, Ill.
November 30	Metallurgy & Materials Committee	Alexandria, Va.