

# Emergency Preparedness and Response Overview for OSHA VPP

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires worksites seeking Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) approval to establish minimally effective written emergency response procedures (e.g., fire, chemical spills, accidents, natural disasters) for all work shifts. These procedures ensure your workforce understands how to respond to different emergencies. Your emergency procedures and plans must address the following:

Components of Emergency Procedures		
Assessment of the emergency	Assignment of responsibilities	Means of reporting emergencies
Responsible person(s) to contact about emergency procedures	Procedures to follow for each type of emergency, including accountability of employees	Routine and emergency exits
First aid	Medical care	Emergency meeting places
Emergency telephone numbers	Training exercises and frequency	Coverage of critical operations
Personal protective equipment, where needed	Procedures to critique and document drills	Procedures to identify and implement recommendations for improvement

The information in this one pager will help you implement and sustain your OSHA VPP emergency preparedness and response expectations. Additionally, integrate these requirements and information into your written plans: 29 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) [Subpart E](#): Exit Routes and Emergency Planning; [29 CFR 1910.38](#): Emergency Action Plans; and [29 CFR 1910.39](#): Fire Prevention Plans.



Image retrieved from Bing Images (Creative Commons)

## WORKPLACE ASSESSMENT

Identify the types of emergencies impacting your organization. Consider utilizing a committee or working group to evaluate workplace risks and vulnerability during emergencies. Involve the fire department and other life safety professionals. Evaluate emergency equipment, egress routes, and structural features of facilities to determine if existing egress is sufficient and when to exit/shelter in place. Evaluate and prioritize the risk posed by each type of emergency. Use this information to develop emergency procedures.

## EMPLOYEE TRAINING TOPICS AND FREQUENCY

Disseminate emergency procedures so your employees, contractors, and visitors know what to do during an emergency. Explain the basic evacuation procedures, shelter-in-place plans, individual roles and responsibilities, and the specific sounds/visuals of your alarms and emergency notification systems. Review the location and use of emergency equipment, including any policies specific to your organization (e.g., permitting only trained users to operate fire extinguishers). Ensure personnel know how to report emergencies, perform critical operations, and account for everyone during an emergency. Incorporate this information into new employee orientation and contractor/visitor briefings.

### When to share emergency procedures with employees:

- When initially assigning the employee to a job
- When the employee's responsibilities change
- When the plans or procedures change

## EMERGENCY EVACUATION MAPS

Post emergency evacuation maps throughout your facility to help employees, contractors, and visitors locate an egress route or shelter-in-place locations. Incorporate the following elements into your evacuation maps so they are readable and easy to understand:

- ✓ Ensure no emergency exits in restrooms, through rooms with hazardous materials, or into narrow passages
- ✓ Ensure no use of elevators to reach an emergency exit
- ✓ Designate primary and secondary exit routes
- ✓ Mark the location of the assembly area(s)
- ✓ Indicate exits with wheelchair access
- ✓ Indicate the employee's current location ("You Are Here")
- ✓ Orient maps to the direction faced when viewing
- ✓ Make maps specific for each location (do not show exit routes for the whole floor on the same map).

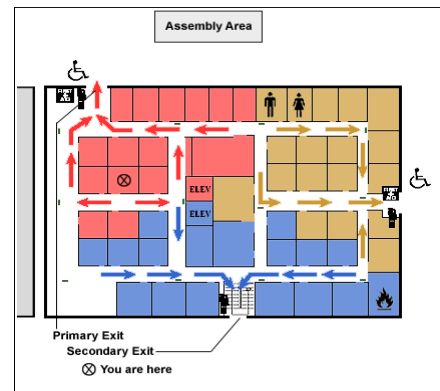


Image retrieved from OSHA.gov

## EMERGENCY DRILLS

Annual evacuation drills and periodic emergency drills verify the effectiveness of your emergency procedures. Conduct emergency drills during all work shifts so every employee has the opportunity to participate. Develop a process for absent employees to participate in drills (e.g., additional drills, make-up training walking egress routes and visiting assigned rally points). Work with emergency officials to organize drills; consider including obstacles to see if employees can exit if they encounter difficulties. Critique the drill with an after-action review, focusing on whether employees know where to go and what to do, as well as the effectiveness of the process to account for all personnel. Share lessons learned with management and employees so they know how to improve.

## REVIEW, COORDINATION, AND UPDATES

Review written plans and procedures when any facility change occurs. Establish temporary plans and interim life safety measures when needed (e.g., during facility renovations and maintenance on alarm systems). Review and update your workplace hazard assessment periodically to include the current status and risks of your workplace. Conduct periodic testing and inspections of emergency equipment to verify they function as intended. Communicate all updates to the workforce.

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at: <https://www.smscx.org/>.

