

Disaster Preparedness Planning Guide for Facilities

INTRODUCTION

This preparedness planning guide is directed to facility managers and administrators and is intended to provide assistance in meeting the planning requirements necessary to protect employees and clients who may be conducting business within the facility. It is intentionally generic in nature, so that it may apply to a variety of public buildings and large facilities where resident or worker populations may be at risk as a result of natural or human-caused disasters. Effective planning and response is achieved by coordination, cooperation and the participation of many groups, individuals and the community. A highly effective planning and response team can be formed between the facility staff and community groups.

I. Everybody Has a Role in Disaster Planning and Response

A. The Facility Manager

1. Acts as facility Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC).
2. Coordinates development of the disaster plan with municipal emergency management officials to make sure that it is compatible with the municipality's Emergency Operations Plan.
3. Provides leadership in the development of the facility's disaster plan and emergency preparedness education.
4. Assigns selected facility staff members the responsibility for developing the disaster plan.
5. Assigns emergency responsibilities to staff members as required and with regard to individual capacities and normal service function.
6. Secures necessary in-service training for staff members.
7. Conducts drills and initiates needed plan revisions based on drill evaluations.
8. Arranges for the procurement, storage and maintenance of emergency supplies and equipment. Supplies may include necessary medications for residents, and a power generator, of appropriate capacity and fuel to operate it for a 24-hour period.
9. Arranges for the installation of an emergency warning system.
10. Keeps resident and staff members informed of emergency plan revisions.
11. Supervises periodic safety checks of the physical facility, equipment and vehicles.

12. Provides copies of the disaster plan to the municipal Emergency Management Agency (EMA).

B. The Facility Professional Staff

1. Participates in developing the facility's disaster plan.
2. Participates in emergency preparedness in-service training programs.
3. Helps occupants develop confidence in their ability to care for themselves.
4. Provides leadership during a period of enforced confinement during an emergency.

C. Facility Maintenance Personnel

1. Inspects the facility for structural safety and report defects.
2. Identifies shut off valves and switches for gas, oil, water and electricity. Posts a chart showing shut off locations so that others can use them in an emergency.
3. Provides cut off valves for steam lines in shelter areas.
4. Provides for emergency operation of the ventilating system.
5. Displays locations of all protective equipment.
6. Instructs all staff members on how to use fire extinguishers.
7. Maintains an inventory of tools and equipment.
8. Inspects and tests the emergency generator on a regular basis.
9. Advises management of hazardous and protective areas in facility, and where the available emergency equipment and alternate power sources are located.

D. Facility Food Service Personnel

1. Maintains adequate supplies of non-perishable food and water for emergency use. Prepares a list of needed food supplies and a reliable source for supplies that can make them available under emergency or disaster conditions.
2. Rotates supplies to assure freshness.
3. Trains in using mass feeding practices under emergency conditions.
4. Practices kitchen safety laws, rules and regulations at all times.

E. Community

1. The community is a valuable resource for:
 - a) Warning
 - b) Resources
 - c) Information
 - d) Educational material
 - e) Other related activities
2. This assistance should come, primarily, from:
 - a) Municipal Governments
 - b) Emergency Medical Services
 - c) Law enforcement agencies
 - d) Fire departments
3. Other possible sources of assistance include:
 - a) Individuals
 - b) Churches
 - c) Civic clubs and organizations
 - d) Businesses and industries
 - e) Hospitals
 - f) Local Red Cross, Salvation Army or other voluntary service agencies

II. Preparing the Disaster Plan

Facility management personnel have a responsibility to staff members, occupants, patrons and anyone who happens to be in their facility, to develop a disaster plan. Authority for the plan and its implementation should be established and the circumstances during which emergency procedures are to be followed must be identified. An awareness of the natural and human-caused hazards likely to occur in a particular area and a thoughtful assessment of the facility and available resources - both material and human - are required.

A. Plan Content: It is important that facilities have a comprehensive written plan with procedures to be followed when an internal or external disaster occurs. The plan should be rehearsed periodically.

1. It should contain a section in which the unique needs of the facility's residents are identified and assessed.

2. As a minimum, the following emergency situations should be addressed:

a) Fire and explosion;

b) Severe weather situations;

c) Utility failure;

d) Hazardous materials and radiological emergency;

e) Acts of terrorism or civic unrest;

f) Any other emergency that may directly impact the facility.

3. For the above emergencies, there may be common functional responses. (e.g., The same evacuation procedures will work for a fire or a severe storm.) The plan should include detailed emergency procedures or checklists that are easily understood. A standardized format should be used throughout the plan that clearly establishes how procedures will be carried out. The procedures should answer the questions "who, what, when, where and how" and allow the facility staff members to be ready to act effectively in an emergency situation.

4. The above procedures should also address, as a minimum:

a) Assignment of responsibility to staff members.

b) Special needs of clients or employees.

c) Notification of municipal emergency services.

d) Provisions to shelter people inside the facility if it's more dangerous outside.

e) Alternate living arrangements if the sheltering is required for a period of a few days.

f) Evacuation plans if it's necessary to leave the facility.

g) Arrangements for transportation if it is necessary to evacuate to a remote location.

h) Protection of valuable records.

i) Emergency energy sources.

5. If portions of a facility's plan are contingent on the resources or services of another facility or organization, the facility must execute a written agreement with the other party or parties that acknowledges their participation in the plan. This mutual agreement should be part of the plan.

B. Plan Specifics:

1. A description of how the facility is to receive notification of an actual or impending disaster/emergency.

2. A description of how facility management will communicate the warning to occupants of the facility.

3. A list of emergency telephone numbers, including the administrative chain-of-command and community emergency services.

4. An identification of designated shelter areas or best protective areas inside the facility.

5. An identification of evacuation assembly areas outside of the facility.

6. A description of the organization and action of staff members and other occupants in moving to shelters or evacuating and moving to host facilities.

7. A list of responsibilities and assignments(s) of staff members for anticipated emergency situations.

8. A description of education, training and drills required to assure effective operation of the plan.

9. A provision for periodic review and revision.

C. Planning Recommendations: The ideal plan is easy to find and easy to read during an emergency. You must keep in mind that the plan must be specific enough to give directions for immediate action, but flexible enough to allow for changes as unexpected situations develop. The planners should strive for simplicity and clarity. A few hints to consider are:

1. Provide space for the phone numbers of key responding personnel and alternates.

2. Step-by-step procedures should be as simple as possible so that they are clear to someone unfamiliar with the plan.

3. Whenever possible, save time and avoid confusion by developing standard procedures for various situations.

4. Staff responsibilities should be as close as possible to "normal" jobs so staff members are familiar with their emergency location and responsibilities.

5. Use checklists to ensure that infrequently-practiced emergency jobs are done correctly.

D. The Planning Team

The Facility Manager should select a limited number of staff members to participate in the development or revision of the disaster preparedness plan. It is suggested that the manager or the person designated to act in his/her absence, acts as the Chairperson of the disaster response planning committee. Part of the Chairperson's duties will be to secure the counsel and assistance of the municipal Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) and other agencies.

E. Supporting Information: A comprehensive plan should be derived from a variety of sources. Much of the information gathered to assist in the planning will also be useful in emergency response.

1. Planners should know the history of natural or man-made disasters which have affected the facility and community. Local historical clubs, emergency service agencies, libraries and newspaper files are all good sources of information.

2. Climatic data can be supplied by local weather stations. Planners should know the general weather and climatic patterns of their area. All parts of Pennsylvania are subject to severe weather, but vulnerability to different types of weather varies widely across the State.

3. Topographic and street maps can be used to assess vulnerability to hazards such as floods, landslides, forest fires and transportation accidents which may involve dangerous materials. They may also aid in planning traffic flow in case an evacuation is necessary.

4. Facility floor plans and blue prints offer planners a summary of building features so that shelter areas can be determined and evacuation routes planned to avoid hazardous areas (boiler rooms, etc.) and take advantage of safety construction (fire walls, etc.).

5. Charts are also valuable when planning or during actual emergencies. Organizational charts outline responsibilities associated with job titles and list names, titles, addresses and phone numbers of key personnel. For the planner, charts are useful lists of human and physical resources available for action. During actual emergencies, the charts, prominently displayed on a wall, provide the necessary information at a glance. Even someone unfamiliar with the plan should be able to use them to summon help. Information on the charts and maps should be kept as simple as possible. Visual effectiveness can be increased by using color codes and large uncomplicated symbols.

6. A current list of names, addresses and phone numbers for staff members and emergency service agencies should be developed and maintained. A pocket card listing this key information should be given to staff members for quick reference.

F. Hazard Assessment: Writing the plan is preceded by a careful assessment of the facility and its county, region or metropolitan area. Using the assembled maps, local

history and climatic data, planners should determine planning priorities. While all hazards should be addressed, the greater effort will be devoted to those emergencies most likely to occur. The hazard assessment should include:

1. Evaluation of the building and site, including inspection of the grounds.
2. Evaluation of the surrounding area in terms of vegetation, buildings or activities which may be potential hazards. Locate pipelines, rail lines and highways that are used for the transportation of hazardous materials. Note storage areas and industries that have hazardous or radioactive materials.
3. Evaluation of the community and region. Consider natural phenomena such as tornadoes, hurricanes and flash flooding.