

Organizing for Fire Safety

If a fire strikes your business, everyone will be impacted. The business may shut down temporarily. Years of work may be destroyed, costing money and causing frustration. Jobs may be lost. Worst of all, people may be hurt or killed.

Building owners, employers, and employees share a common interest in fire prevention. Building owners must maintain the building in accordance with fire codes. Employers and employees need to work together to develop an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and to participate in regular fire drills. Working together, employers and employees can greatly reduce the threat of fire in the office. The following are some of their responsibilities:



Fire Safety Work Plan

Work as a team to develop an emergency action plan (EAP). An EAP describes the safest escape routes for all workers. Choose area leaders for emergency evacuations. Decide how to help disabled coworkers to safety. Include a safe meeting place outdoors. Once your EAP is developed, post it and distribute it to all employees.

Office Fire Safety

SAMPLE COPY

Stay
Safe
on the
Job



Employers

- Design the workplace to meet OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) regulations
- Inspect the workplace for fire safety from time to time
- Correct any potentially dangerous situations quickly and completely
- Post EAP and exit route maps
- Educate new employees about EAP

Employees

- Know the full address of the company and how to call the fire department
- Watch for and report problems
- Avoid activities that can create fire hazards
- Know two ways out of each work area
- Know how to operate fire alarm system



Fire Safety Project List

A company's biggest responsibility is the safety and welfare of its employees. A workplace can hold many potential dangers. That is why an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is so important. To help you prioritize your fire safety projects, here are some things to think about.

Manage Your Risk

No matter what your business or what kind of building the business is in, there are potential fire hazards you can watch for.

Keep the workplace clean and orderly. Boxes or rubbish may block exits. Keep office kitchens clean. The microwave, toaster, and coffee machine should not give off smoke or sparks, and their cords and plugs should be intact.

Any office equipment that produces heat must be well ventilated. Inspect electrical equipment for cracked cords, faulty switches, or odd smells. Keep flammables 12-18 inches from light fixtures and other electrical equipment. Avoid using extension cords. Have a licensed electrician inspect your building annually.

Have a qualified contractor inspect your heating equipment each autumn. Do not store cleaning supplies, paper, or other combustibles near furnaces or water heaters.

If smoking is allowed in the workplace, ashtrays should be tip-resistant. Empty ashtrays frequently, when contents are cool. Dispose of smoking materials only in ashtrays.

Identify any special fire hazards in your office and determine how they can be handled safely. Include these steps in your EAP.



In Case of Fire

Fire prevention is the main goal, but you need to be prepared in case a fire does occur.

Your workplace is probably required to have a fire alarm system. The building may also have sprinklers and/or automatic fire doors. Most commercial buildings are made of fire-resistant materials that slow the spread of fire.

Portable fire extinguishers can put out small fires and prevent their spread. If your company provides fire extinguishers for employee use, they must provide training in using the extinguishers. If fire extinguishers and training are not provided, all employees must evacuate immediately for any fire.

If Rescue is Necessary

If you are trapped in your office by smoke and flames, do not panic.

- Seal cracks around doors with damp clothing.
- Telephone the fire department, even if they are already on the scene. Tell them exactly where to find you.
- Open a window. Do not break the windows! You may need to close them later.
- Stay near the window where you can signal for help with a flashlight, light cloth, or sheet of paper.



Out of the Office

In any fire, the most important thing is to protect lives. Follow your emergency action plan and exit quickly:

- Crawl low under smoke. Keep your head 12-24 inches from the floor. Heavier toxins can gather in a thin layer below 12 inches.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a damp cloth.
- Close doors behind you, but do not lock them.
- Never use an elevator under any circumstances.
- Most enclosed stairwells in buildings over two stories are fire-resistant. Walk quickly but carefully down. Never go back up the stairs.
- After exiting, go to the safe meeting place shown in the EAP. A head count should be taken there.
- Once you are out of a burning building, NEVER go back inside. If you know of coworkers who may be inside, get that information to firefighters who are trained to perform rescues.

