

# Emergency Preparedness and Response Overview for OSHA VPP

Worksites seeking Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) recognition are required to establish minimally effective written emergency response procedures (e.g., 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:

## When to share emergency procedures with employees:

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

• Assessment of the emergency type	• Assignment of responsibilities
• Means of reporting emergencies	• Name or job title of person who can be contacted about emergency procedures
• Evacuation procedures	• Routine and emergency exits
• First aid	• Medical care
• Emergency meeting places	• Accountability for employees
• Annual evacuation drills	• Emergency telephone numbers
• Training exercises and frequency	• Additional emergency preparedness training
• Documentation, critique, and recommendations to improve drills	• Personal protective equipment, where needed

Emergency preparedness and response goes beyond simply having procedures in place. You also need to analyze, review, and evaluate the effectiveness of your emergency procedures. Some additional details, provided below, can help you with implementing and sustaining OSHA VPP emergency preparedness and response expectations. Review 29 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) [Subpart E](#) – Means of Egress, [29 CFR 1910.38](#), Emergency Action Plans, and [29 CFR 1910.39](#), Fire Prevention Plans, for emergency preparedness regulations.

## WORKPLACE ASSESSMENT

Employers need to assess their workplace to identify the types of emergencies that may impact the organization. Consider utilizing a committee or working group to help assess workplace risks and vulnerability during emergencies. Involve the fire department and other life safety professionals to evaluate emergency equipment, egress routes, and structural features of facilities to determine if existing egress is sufficient, when to exit/shelter in place at the facility, and to identify areas needing improvement. Use this assessment to prioritize, based on risk, the development of emergency procedures.



## EMPLOYEE TRAINING TOPICS AND FREQUENCY

Employers must communicate procedures to the workforce so employees know which actions to take during an emergency. Inform all personnel of basic evacuation procedures and shelter-in-place plans. Communicate the person(s) in charge and individual roles and responsibilities. All personnel, including visitors, must be aware of the specific sounds/visuals of alarms and emergency notification systems. Supervisors should communicate hazards requiring emergency action/response to contractors and visitors. Also, review the location and use of emergency equipment, including any organization-specific policies for its use (e.g., only trained fire extinguisher users are permitted to operate fire extinguishers). Ensure your procedures include how to report emergencies, perform critical operations, and account for personnel during an emergency. You can incorporate most of this training into new employee orientation and during visitor and contractor briefings.

## EMERGENCY EVACUATION MAPS

Many employees will indicate they know how to exit the facility during an emergency. Employers must also consider visitors, contractors, and employees working in other locations that may not be familiar with the area. Post emergency evacuation maps throughout your facility to help these individuals locate an egress route or shelter-in-place location, when needed. Incorporate these essential elements onto the evacuation maps so they are readable and easy to understand:

- ✓ No emergency exits in restrooms, through rooms with hazardous materials, or into narrow passages
- ✓ 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

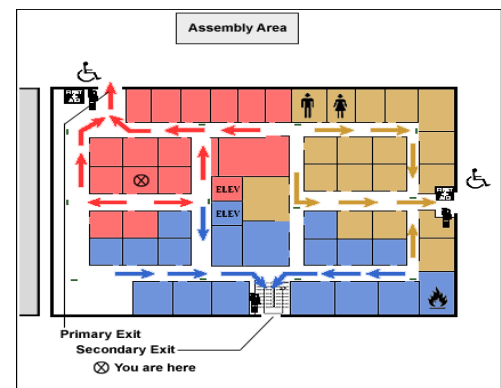


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## EMERGENCY DRILLS

Annual evacuation drills and periodic emergency drills are essential in verifying the effectiveness of your emergency procedures. Hold emergency drills on all work shifts so every employee has the opportunity to participate. Consider make-up training for those employees absent for a drill. Work with emergency officials to set up the drill and consider setting up obstacles to see if employees can find their way if they encounter difficulties. Critique the drill, focusing on if whether employees know where to go and what to do, as well as the effectiveness of the process to account for personnel. Share lessons learned with management and employees so they know where they can improve.

## REVIEW, COORDINATION, AND UPDATES

Review written plans and procedures when facility changes occur. Establish temporary plans and interim life safety measures, when needed (e.g., during facility renovations or maintenance on alarm systems). Review and update the workplace hazard assessment periodically to make sure it reflects the status of the workplace. Conduct periodic testing and inspections of emergency equipment to verify they will 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/>.

