

"For safety's sake—do something."

Emergencies at SSOE

OSHA requires that businesses have an *Emergency Action Plan* for the workplace that addresses all possible emergencies and how employees are to respond. The plan also is to provide emergency response contact information, as well as exit routes, shelter in place, and safe areas for emergencies. Along with the Emergency Action Plans, there should be testing of the plan to verify it works and to run drills for employees to practice. There is a strong suggestion that Emergency Plans be tested to identify errors and to get employees involved.

Many businesses hold annual drills to ensure that employees get some hands-on practice in responding to different types of emergencies. Under normal circumstances, you may choose to use a fire drill, a severe weather drill, or even a shelter in place drill. Communicating what employees are to do during an emergency is important so that everyone knows what to do and when. Emergency escape routes should be posted around your workplace to help others in case they forget where to go and to be a reminder during the year. The saying that “practice makes perfect” is very true when employees are responding to emergencies, as we all need to know how to respond.

During this COVID pandemic, SSOE and many other businesses have elected to not hold emergency drills in the workplace due to limited staffing, social distancing requirements, and large groupings. In lieu of physical testing, you could do messaging to employees outlining your Emergency Action Plans, doing a reminder of employee's response actions, communicating expectations in department meetings, and verifying that your plans and postings are current and updated. Employees should also review the Emergency Action Plans for their workplace and ask their manager, or Safety Team if they have any questions. Evacuation routes, designated shelter locations, and evacuation staging locations should be known by all employees. Practice the plan virtually this year instead of physical practice. At SSOE, we post our Emergency Action Plans for our offices on the Company Intranet site, under the Safety Tab, and then under the Office Emergency Plans tile for employees to be able to review on their own. If you are not an SSOE employee, I encourage you to ask your manager what your office Emergency Plan is, and where you can find the information you need to have a safe response during an emergency at your workplace.

Tips for handling emergencies:

- Evaluate your workplace to identify additional risks during an emergency.
- Determine safe areas internally for sheltering in place and areas to hold up in if trapped.
- Ensure employees do not use elevators in an emergency.
- Identify exits and then routes from routine areas. Post these in common areas.
- Ensure exits are clear for travel, not impeded, and not locked. Signs should identify all exits.
- During an evacuation, conduct headcounts and accountability checks to ensure everyone has escaped.
- Identify extinguisher locations and mark them on your mapping.
- Train employees on what to do and when.
- Review and update Emergency Action Plans annually.

Safety Scott says
Be prepared for an emergency and
know what to do!
Safety Always!