

Emergency preparedness issues for hospitals

Richard Mendelson
Area Director
Manhattan Area Office

Greater New York Hospital Association – October 8, 2003

OSHA's mission

To protect workers' safety and health

Our toolbox

- ❖ **Enforcement**
- ❖ **Consultation**
- ❖ **Outreach, training, and education**
- ❖ **Partnership and cooperative programs**

OSHA's role in emergency management

- ❖ OSH Act requires employers to protect employees from workplace hazards
- ❖ OSHA has assigned duties under the Federal Response Plan

Workplace hazards – Emergencies and developing trends

- WTC (tenants and responders)
- Anthrax (USPS, media outlets, responders)
- SARS (healthcare workers)
- The Station night club

What is a workplace emergency?

Fire

Severe weather

Hurricane

Building collapse

Explosion

Civil disturbance

Toxic gas release

Flood

Tornado

Workplace violence

Terrorism

Radiological incident

Chemical spill

Technological or transportation incident

How should you protect your employees and your business?

- Pre-plan
- Pre-plan
- Pre-plan
- Conduct a hazard- or threat-assessment
- Brainstorm
 - Possible scenarios
 - Worst-case
 - Most likely
- Consider
 - History
 - Environment
 - Topography
 - Nearby transportation and facilities
 - Weather and climate

Why is it so important to plan?

- Hospitals are part of the **critical infrastructure**, but their design and nature make them a **soft target**.
- Coordinate with local officials
 - Expectations
 - Hazard analysis
 - Community and other resources
- Reduce the need for on-the-spot decision making

Implement an **emergency action plan**

- Required by OSHA under certain circumstances
- Recommended in all cases
- Consider involving management and employees in the development process
- Goal is to protect life and minimize property damage

What must an **emergency action plan** include?

- Preferred means for reporting fires and other emergencies
- Evacuation policy and procedures
- Emergency escape procedures and routes
 - Floor plans, maps, areas of refuge
- Name, title, contacts for additional information

What must an **emergency action plan** include?

- Critical operation shut-down procedures
- Fire-fighting or other essential services
- Rescue and medical duties
- Also recommended:
 - Assembly area
 - Accountability procedures
 - Alternative communication center
 - Document management and data backup

When should you evacuate?

- Designated person should make the decision
 - *Protecting health and safety is first priority*
- Some emergencies warrant immediate action
 - Example: fires
- In other emergencies, it may be advisable to stay in a protected area
 - Example: Toxic gas release in neighborhood

When should you evacuate?

- Local emergency officials may order, request, or recommend certain actions
 - Follow instructions for securing the premises, evacuation routes, and shelter / assembly areas
- Natural disasters (eg., hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes) may warrant a different response
- Consider structural stability following earthquakes, explosions, or collapses

How do you establish evacuation routes and exits?

- Designate primary and secondary (backup) routes and exits
 - Clearly marked and well lit
 - Wide enough to accommodate personnel
 - Unobstructed and clear of debris
 - Unlikely to expose personnel to additional hazards
 - Have employees move away from the affected building
 - Do not congregate near exit discharge or where they may hamper emergency operations
- If drawings are used, post them prominently

How do you account for employees after an evacuation?

- Avoid delays in rescue, or unnecessary searches
- Designate assembly areas
- Take a head count
 - Identify names and last-known location for anyone not accounted for
- Establish a method for non-employees
 - Suppliers, customers, other visitors
- Procedures if incident expands

What type of training do employees need?

- Types of emergencies that may occur
- Proper course of action in response
- Size of workplace and workforce, processes and materials, level of on-site and off-site resources will determine level of training
- Address any special hazards
- Clearly communicate who is in charge

What type of training do employees need?

- General guidance:
 - Individual roles and responsibilities
 - Threats, hazards, and protective actions
 - Notification, warning, and communication
 - Emergency response procedures
 - Evacuation, shelter, accountability procedures
 - Location and use of emergency equipment
 - Emergency shut-down procedures

What type of training do employees need?

- Consider:
 - First-aid & CPR
 - including bloodborne pathogen protection
 - Respiratory protection
 - Emergency escape-only respirators
 - Methods to prevent unauthorized access
- Consider holding drills or exercises
 - Coordinate with outside resources
 - Critique each drill

How often do you need to train your employees?

- When plan is initially developed
- When new employees are hired
- When new equipment, materials, or processes are introduced
- When facility design or layout change
- When plan is updated or revised
- Consider annual training

What about hazardous substances?

- Source could be internal to plant or facility
- Source could be external
 - Neighboring plant or facility
 - Transportation accident
- If chemicals are used, employer must comply with 1910.1200 (hazard communication)
 - Consult with MSDSs for planning and guidance

What special equipment should you provide?

- Personal protective equipment appropriate for the hazards present
 - Conduct a hazard assessment
 - Consider eyes and face; head; extremities, hands, feet; chemical protection; respiratory protection; temperature extremes
- Other special equipment or warning devices necessary for unique hazards at each worksite

What are some unique issues for hospitals?

- “First Receivers” for victims
- Decontamination
 - Gross? Secondary?
- Hazard analysis and risk assessment
- PPE selection
 - Ability to perform patient care; Appropriate to risk, no greater hazard; User acceptance, training, and familiarity; Medical surveillance and fit testing; Readiness for use
- Integration in Incident Command System

What about terrorism or acts of violence?

- Deliberate action
- May cause any other type of emergency
- May sabotage or affect other systems, such as blocking egress routes, ventilation, etc.
- Workplace violence
 - Different types, based on perpetrator
 - Implement effective countermeasures – training, access control, visibility, etc.
 - Plan for incident response

OSHA resources

- Compliance assistance
- Technical support
- Consultation service
- Publications, tools, standards
- Internet and electronic resources



**Occupational Safety and
Health Administration**