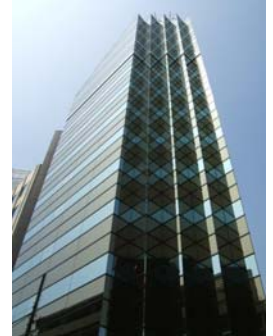




Do You Have a Workplace Evacuation Plan?

If you smelled natural gas in your workplace, would you know what to do? Would you know what to do if there was a toxic chemical in the air outside?

Since most Americans spend at least 8 hours a day at work, it is likely that you may be at work when an emergency such as a storm, earthquake, gas leak, or fire occurs. People often do not think about what to do during these situations until they happen. The key to staying safe is to make a plan now for how to react if a disaster or public health emergency occurs while you are at work.



What can I do to prepare?

There are things you can do now so that you will be able to react quickly during an emergency:

- Find out what your workplace evacuation plan is.
- Learn where the nearest fire alarm is, how to use it and what it sounds like when it goes off.
- Learn where the two exits closest to your work station are.
- Count the doors, desks, and work stations between your workspace and the two nearest exits. You may need to escape in the dark because of smoke or a power failure.
- Keep a flashlight at your workstation. You may need it if there is a power failure.
- If you work above the ground floor, practice taking the stairs to exit the building.

What responsibilities do employers have for evacuation planning?

Employers need to have an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) to keep their employees safe. The evacuation part of the plan should include:

- A way to alert employees, including those with disabilities, to evacuate or take other action.
- Signs indicating emergency exits.
- A place for employees to meet once they leave the building and a way to account for everyone after an evacuation.
- A schedule for holding evacuation drills and other training as often as needed to keep employees ready for emergencies.
- A regular schedule for checking that the alert system works properly.

To learn more about workplace emergency and evacuation planning, visit:

<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3088.pdf>

What about employees with disabilities or other special needs?

Employers must plan for the safe evacuation of all their employees. If you have special needs, talk to your employer about any help you might need to evacuate during emergencies. To ensure everyone's safety, evacuation plans must:

- Include a way to alert people who cannot hear an alarm or instructions about emergencies or see or read signs
- Address the safety of employees with special needs. Special needs are any limitations that may increase a person's risk during an emergency. For example, these may include physical disabilities or temporary mobility impairments such as a broken leg that prevent someone from evacuating without help. Special needs may also include mental, sight, hearing, or language limitations that affect a person's ability to receive or understand emergency instructions.

How will I know if I need to stay or go in an emergency?

Your building safety plan describes what to do in different kinds of emergencies. Make sure that you know what it says. If there is no written plan, ask your supervisor what you should do. Depending on the type of emergency, the most important decision you will make is whether to leave the building or find a safe place inside to stay (shelter-in-place). Ideally, you will be told what to do during an emergency. However, you may have to make that decision yourself, before public safety personnel arrive on the scene.

Below are some guidelines to help you decide whether to stay or to go during different emergencies. No matter the emergency, follow the directions of public safety personnel.

Emergency:	What to do:
Fire or smoke	If you cannot see the fire, feel the door that leads to the exit to make sure it is not hot. Check that smoke is not coming in under the door. If it is, you will need to find another way to leave the building. If smoke is coming under the door, use towels or heavy cloth to block it. Do NOT open the door unless you are sure that it is safe. Leave the building using a safe route and call 9-1-1.
Gas leak	Do NOT turn any lights on or off, smoke, use any electrical equipment (including elevators), use a cell phone, or operate a vehicle or any other equipment that could create sparks. Leave the building and call the gas company or 9-1-1.
Flood	Leave the building right away and find higher ground.
Hurricane	In most cases, there will be warnings to evacuate long before a hurricane makes landfall. Flooding, storm surges, and high winds are the hazards that may occur. Follow evacuation instructions of public safety personnel and follow evacuation routes that are posted.
Tornado	If your workplace is in a trailer and a tornado warning is given, leave the trailer and go to a safer place. Find low ground outside (such as a ditch) or go to the lowest floor of a nearby building. Shelter in a basement whenever possible, in an inside room (such as a bathroom without windows) against a wall. If no other options are available, shelter under a sturdy table.
Earthquake	Choose a safe place in whatever room you are in—under a sturdy table or desk, or against an inside wall away from where glass could shatter (around windows, mirrors, pictures) or where bookcases or other heavy furniture could fall over.
Chemical or other hazardous materials exposure:	If the exposure is inside the building, follow your employer's instructions for making sure that the materials do not spread. You may need to leave the building if there is a large spill or toxic gas. Leave using emergency exit procedures. If you have been exposed to a chemical or other hazardous material, make sure that medical personnel evaluate you. If the exposure is outside the building, stay inside until public safety personnel tell you that it is safe to leave.



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This publication is funded through CDC Cooperative Agreement #U90/CCU124251-02. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the CDC.

Mission: As part of a national network of Centers for Public Health Preparedness that are funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Yale Center for Public Health Preparedness, based at the Yale School of Public Health, works to ensure that frontline public health workers are prepared to respond to public health emergencies including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and disease

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide preparedness information to public health professionals.

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