

Workplace Fire Safety

Outline for an Employee Safety Program



Goals:

To ensure that employees are knowledgeable in fire prevention and emergency response in the workplace.

Objectives:

Businesses should:

- ❖ 1. Develop a fire and life safety emergency plan (see handout).
- ❖ 2. Provide training for all employees.

Employees should be able to:

- ❖ Describe the emergency procedures for their facility, in case of fire.
- ❖ Identify common fire hazards in the workplace and how to prevent them.
- ❖ Identify special situations or individuals in the workplace that may require an emergency response different than the standard response; i.e., evacuating instructions for physically impaired persons.
- ❖ Demonstrate how to correctly use a fire extinguisher.

Materials:

- ❖ Developing your own fire and life safety emergency plan.
- ❖ Brochures (obtained from the Portland Fire Bureau), such as “Portable Fire Extinguishers” and “10 Tips for Fire Safety”.
- ❖ Videos (checked out from the Portland Fire Bureau), such as “*Get out Alive*” and *Fire Extinguisher Safety*”.

Lesson Outline

Keeping the interest of staff members during fire safety training can be a challenge – especially when you are reviewing information which employees have received in the past. Involving employees in the program is a good way to maintain their interest, while increasing their knowledge level on fire and life safety. Also, try limiting the program to less than 60 minutes in length.

Getting Started:

- ❖ Review the employees’ objectives.
- ❖ Make sure all employees have a copy of your facility’s written fire and life safety emergency plan.

- ❖ View “Get Out Alive.” This video provides information on the dangers from fire and gives a realistic impression of how fire starts and the speed with which fire grows. Points to make with this video include:
 1. The importance of knowing the fire and life safety emergency plan.
 2. The need to become familiar with your emergency procedures before you need to follow them.
 3. The need to react quickly whenever a fire is discovered or the alarm sounds.
- ❖ Review the actions to be taken if an employee discovers a fire. Remember to stress the importance of:
 1. Alerting others in the building to begin evacuation.
 2. Calling 9-1-1 as quickly as possible (even if your alarm system is monitored).
 3. Closing all doors as you evacuate.
- ❖ Discuss your building’s engineered fire and life safety systems. Some key points to remember:
 1. Does everyone know what and where they are and how they work?
 2. Which of the following does your building have and what is their importance in a fire:
 - Smoke detectors
 - Manual pull alarms
 - Stairwells
 - Other
 - Fire doors
 - Alarm systems
 - Sprinklers
- ❖ Discuss hazards particular to your facility. What can you identify and what precautions can be taken?
- ❖ Hold a fire drill at the conclusion of your program to practice your building escape plan. Providing treats as an incentive may help raise interest!

USE THE FOLLOWING SCENARIOS TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION ON EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROCEDURES:

- One hour into your shift, the fire alarm activates. Describe what you may be doing at that time and how you would react to the alarm. What is the first thing you would do? Would you evacuate - where to and by what route? Where would your meeting place be?
- You discover a fire in your work area that is already too big to try and extinguish. Describe what your reaction would be. What would you do and in what order?
- Are there special situations in your facility that you need to be aware of in case of a fire emergency? Describe any special situations that would require a response other than that generally described for staff (non-ambulatory individuals, customers or visitors unfamiliar with evacuation procedures, patients with special medical needs).

Fire Extinguishers

- ❖ Provide an example of each type of extinguisher found in your building.
- ❖ Distribute fire extinguisher handouts to each employee.
- ❖ Show the video “Fire Extinguisher Safety”.
- ❖ Discuss the types of fire extinguishers found in your building, their location, how to access them and the types of fires on which they would (or would not) be used. Identify the parts of the extinguishers. Pass them around, so that everyone can identify and familiarize themselves with handling them.



NOTE: Personal safety and the safety of others are the most important factors when deciding whether to fight a small fire. Before you begin to fight a fire, be sure of the following:

- Everyone has left or is leaving the building.
- The Fire Department has been called or is being called. Even if you succeed in putting out the fire, it should be inspected – *IT'S THE LAW* that all fires be reported.
- The fire is confined to a small area, such as in a wastebasket, and it is not spreading or getting bigger. A portable fire extinguisher is no match for a large or rapidly advancing fire.
- Your back is towards an unobstructed exit, to which the fire will not spread. You must always assume that you may not be able to extinguish the fire you are fighting. If the fire doesn't diminish with your first attack, or if anything goes wrong, leave immediately and do not return.
- The room is not filled with smoke. Firefighters wear protective breathing equipment, because of the dangers of smoke inhalation. Without protection, you may quickly find yourself unable to breathe or see.

If the fire is small and you can attack it quickly with a ready way out, do so. It is reckless to fight a fire in any other circumstances. If in doubt, leave immediately, close off the area to slow the spread of fire and smoke and wait outside at your designated meeting place for the Fire Department to arrive.

Hands-On Training

If you have extra fire extinguishers available, ones not required for building protection, employees can practice discharging them in an open outdoor area. A garbage can makes a good target and will help contain extinguishing agent if a dry chemical powder is used. Since dry chemical powder can be corrosive to some metals when combined with water, care should be taken not to use it near cars or other equipment. Each person should take a turn pulling the pin, aiming the extinguisher low at the base of the fire, squeezing the handle and applying the agent in a sweeping motion. Just a few seconds of discharging the extinguisher gives each person a feel for the real thing. Usually, several people can use one extinguisher before it is fully discharged.

Instructor Information

There are approximately 6,000 office fires in the United States each year. The major causes of fires in office buildings are:

Arson:

Pay close attention to security measures. Keep doors and windows locked after business hours. Keep areas around the building – especially alleys and loading docks – well lit and clear of combustibles. Pay attention to housekeeping within the building as well.

Smoking Materials:

In areas where smoking is allowed, use large, non-tip ashtrays and make sure everything in them is cold before they are emptied. Be sure that no one leaves smoldering cigarettes on furniture or in a wastebasket.

Wiring & Appliances:

Designate an employee to turn off or unplug all appliances, including coffee makers, at the end of each working day. Do not overload outlets and make sure to replace any broken or cracked electrical cords.

Prior to your program, become familiar with your facility's fire and life safety systems. Know which of the following your business has, as well as their location and use:

- Manual pull alarms
- Smoke detectors
- Exit doors and stairwells
- Sprinklers
- Fire extinguishers
- Fire alarm monitoring service
- Voice alarm
- Fire doors

Common fire and life safety hazards to watch for in the workplace are missing or broken fire safety equipment, accumulated trash, open fire doors and burned out exit lights.

It is important for every place of business to have a fire and life safety emergency plan. It's not difficult, just a well thought out plan that takes into consideration the unique features of each building and its occupants. This plan should be in writing and easily available to all employees. This includes those who work weekends and off-shifts. The plan should be kept current through periodic updating. For further information developing your own fire and life safety emergency plan, refer to the packet included with this program.

It is also imperative that every alarm is treated as though it is a real emergency, even if the initial source is unknown. If the alarm sounds or a fire is suspected, call 9-1-1 immediately. After calling 9-1-1, if you determine that there is no fire, but rather a malfunction of your equipment or false alarm, call 9-1-1 and relay this information. Never wait to investigate the situation before notifying 9-1-1. Any delay will allow a fire to grow and further endanger the building occupants and property.

DO NOT silence the alarm until given permission to do so by Fire Department personnel or the 9-1-1 operator.

DO NOT reset the alarm until the Fire Department arrives and has investigated the source of the alarm. All fire alarms are to be investigated by the Fire Department.

Whenever you need the assistance of police, fire or emergency medical personnel, you only need to remember one phone number: **9-1-1!** It is important for employees calling 9-1-1 to be able to give the following information: nature of the problem, location, address, nearest cross street and any specifics known. The caller should not hang up until told to do so by the emergency operator.

Close doors when exiting. By closing doors, you help limit the spread of smoke and fire throughout the building. Doors should be closed by employees as they leave and by floor wardens assigned to check the floor during an alarm.

Elevators should never be used by building occupants during a fire emergency. The reasons are three-fold:

1. Elevators often fail during a fire trapping occupants within the elevator.
2. Elevator shafts may fill with smoke, a deadly event in the elevator.
3. The elevator needs to be available for use by arriving firefighters.

Occupants must exit by way of stairwells only. For information on evacuation procedures for non-ambulatory persons, refer to the *Fire Evacuation Procedures for Persons Unable to Exit Stairwells* found in *Developing Your Own Fire and Life Safety Emergency Plan* handout.

It is important to establish an employee meeting place so that all employees can be accounted for after a building evacuation. The meeting place needs to be away from the building so that the area is clear for arriving Fire Department personnel. This will also ensure that occupants are away from any glass or debris that may fall from the building.

If unable to leave the building, create an area of refuge by going to an exterior room.

1. Seal the room. Use wet cloth to stuff around cracks in doors and seal up vents to protect against smoke.
2. **DO NOT BREAK THE WINDOWS!** Flames and smoke can come back in from the outside. Keep close to the floor where the clearest air is. If you need air, slightly open the window and be prepared to close it quickly.

Fire Code requirements specify the size, number and location of fire extinguishers within your facility. These requirements help establish a protection level appropriate for the hazard class of your building. Make sure you know the types, sizes and maintenance requirements of your extinguishers, as well as the basics of extinguisher operation.

The Public Education Office provides assistance in evacuation planning, as well as resources for training staff and building residents. If you need further information, call the Public Education Office weekdays at 503-823-3700.

Thank you for taking responsibility for the safety of your facility and its residents!



YOUR SAFETY IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!

Portland Fire Bureau

503-823-3700

Fire Prevention Division