

Preparing to Shelter at Work

Issues for Company & Building Management to Consider

I. Responsibility for Providing Shelter

1. Who is the work site responsible for protecting in a shelter-in-place emergency?
 - a. Employees who work in the building?
 - b. Employees who are outside?
 - c. Customers, clients, students, patients, visitors?
 - d. Dependent children who are in the work site on a regular basis?
2. What is the maximum number of people who could be inside at the time of an emergency?
3. Under what circumstances will employees and other people inside be instructed or given the option to protect themselves by sheltering in the work place building?
4. How will the conditions for sheltering in place differ in these emergencies?
 - a. In a dirty bomb explosion, will people need to stay in rooms or corridors that can protect them from the dust and radiation outside?
 - b. If a shooter is in the building, will people need to be in locked or barricaded rooms that the shooter cannot enter?
 - c. In an electrical blackout, will people have unrestricted access to the building? What functions will building generators and office batteries support? For how long?
 - d. In a snowstorm, will all systems in the building be functional? Will the people inside be in any danger?

II. Communication

1. How will information about the emergency be transmitted to people?
 - a. Do current strategies clearly distinguish emergencies in which people need to shelter in place from emergencies in which they need to evacuate the building?
 - b. How will the work place communicate with employees who are out of the building at the time of the emergency? What will they be told to do?
2. How will the people sheltering in the building communicate with the outside world during the emergency?
 - a. If some forms of communication are not operational during the emergency, does the work place have back-up ways to receive and send information?

III. Basic and Medical Needs

1. What emergency supplies are individual employees storing in the work place?
2. Are other basic and medical supplies needed that employees cannot store on their own (or that customers, clients, or visitors would need)?
 - a. What do these supplies need to include (e.g., water, food, blankets, flashlights, a generator, first-aid supplies)?
 - b. Do any of these supplies need to be replaced on a regular basis? How often?

IV. Protection from Toxic Substances Outside

1. What actions will be taken to prevent toxic substances from coming into the building?
 - a. How many employees know how to close or seal windows, doors, and vents; to disable automatic doors; and to turn off air conditioners?
 - b. Are instructions for carrying out these tasks readily available so other employees could do them, too?
2. Which room(s) in the building will provide the best protection from toxic substances outside?
 - a. Are these “safe” rooms large enough to accommodate everyone who is likely to be inside at the time?
 - b. Will the people in these rooms have safe access to communications, toilet and washing facilities, and critical basic and medical supplies?
3. Will people be allowed to enter or leave the building?
 - a. What is the basis for this decision?
 - b. Is there a way for people to enter and leave without exposing the people already inside to dangerous amounts of the toxic substances outside?

V. Employee Responsibilities

1. What is expected of various employees during this kind of emergency, and what training have they received to meet their responsibilities?
2. What if critical employees leave or don't show up?
 - a. Does the work site have back-ups for the people in charge as well as everyone else who will be playing important roles during the emergency?
 - b. Is important information about the building readily available so other people who may need to take over will know where things are and what to do?

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