

A Snapshot in Safety and Risk

Are You Ready?

From natural disasters to fire and active shooter events, there are no shortages of emergency situations in the United States. The question often becomes: *Is your organization ready to handle any or all of them?* This safety snapshot outlines some of the most frequent events your organization may face in the next 12 months. Considering the consequences, we recommend you start planning now.

Having an emergency action plan (EAP) in place is not only an OSHA requirement ([29 CFR 1910.38\(a\)](#)), it's a best practice to protect employees and the general public who may visit your facilities. A well-developed emergency plan and proper employee training (to ensure employees understand their roles and responsibilities) can aide in reducing severe employee injuries and less damage during emergencies.

2021 Natural Disasters

According to [NOAA Weather](#) the United States had 20 separate billion plus-dollar weather and climate disasters in 2021, ranking second behind 2020 with 22 weather and climate disasters. Both 2020 and 2021 had increases over the previous years' weather and disaster events. The predictions for 2022 is that it is likely to match the 2021 weather and disaster season. There were 688 direct and indirect fatalities during the 2021 natural disaster seasons, more than double the 2020 season. In review of the disaster calendar a majority of the events spread from July through December. It was unusual to see the number of costly disaster extend through the month of December, wrapping up with the December 30th Marshall Fire. The highest cost disaster was the August 2021 Hurricane Ida with \$75 Billion dollars in damages and 96 deaths.

Commercial Building Fires

It's no surprise that fires are often started in commercial kitchens where open flame is present. The other four on the list you may not have guessed. Specific actions and employee training in how to respond to fires may be the difference between a small incidental event or a five-alarm fire.

The top five commercial building fire causes estimated by the U.S. Fire Administration (www.usfa.fema.gov/data/statistics/#causesNR) in 2019:

- 29.9% - Cooking
- 11.5% - Unintentional/Careless
- 10.8 - Intentional
- 7.3% - Electrical
- 6.7% - Heating

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Active Shooter Events

In 2021 the FBI reported the United States experienced 61 active shooter events. This was a 48% increase over 2020. In 2021, 103 people died, and 140 were wounded. Many of the events occurred where mass number of people gathered or outdoor events.

- The healthcare industry still leads with the most workplace violence incidents.
- Trends in Corporate Security reported almost 25% of businesses are not prepared for an active shooter event in their workplace.
- 30% of employees reported they are unaware or unsure if their employers have emergency preparedness plans.
- Almost 45% of employees reported they are aware of their employer's emergency action plans however the plans are rarely or never tested or include them.
- Workplace violence is the second leading cause of death for females, and 33% of female workers surveyed say they are unaware of their employer's workplace violence emergency plans or program.
- By April 2021 there were already 26 victims of workplace shootings

Employee Instructions and Training Needed

Employee instructions in an Emergency Action Plan should cover at a minimum, actions, procedures and/or reporting requirements for:

- When, how and where to report to, following an emergency evacuation
- When, how and where to, shelter in place
- When, how, where and reporting requirements, during a lockdown or secure in place

Most emergency actions required by employees will fall into one of these categories. However, the required procedures may be different depending on the event. Supporting maps or diagrams should be used to assist the employees to find emergency escape routes, fire extinguisher locations, emergency pull station locations, first-aid kits, or emergency staging areas and safe harbors.

Prepare your Emergency Action Plan

Develop a list of types of emergencies your property may encounter, both manmade and natural.

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Types of Natural Emergencies

Earthquake	Wildfire	Tsunami	Tornado	Hurricane
Blizzard	Flood	Landslide	Mudslide	Severe weather Storms
Lightning	Hailstorm	Straight wind/ wind shear	Volcanic Eruption	Avalanche

Types of Man-Made Emergencies

Poisoning	Violence/workplace shooting	Robbery	Accidents/Medical
Chemical Spills	Bomb Threat	Gas/Fuel Leak	Fire/explosion

- For each type of identified emergency, develop procedures employees need to know to keep them safe and include visual aids to increase or improve their understanding on how to react to emergencies.
- Draft it in clear, easy to understand language to the employee
- Provide copies of the plan or make available to all employees, it must be located where they can find and easily access it
- Your Emergency Action Plan needs to be reviewed and updated annually
- Whenever there is a change in your EAP, notify your employees, and if necessary, provide updated training due to the changes

Plan for an Emergency

Planning for an emergency does not need to be overly complex, a couple of simple steps to include:

- Train your staff in your emergency action plans and what is required of them
- Train your staff in:
 - When, how and where to evacuate if necessary
 - When, how and where to shelter in place if necessary
 - When, how and where to lockdown or secure in place if necessary
 - What to do to remain safe and possibly reduce or eliminate the threat or emergency
 - Who, where and when to report to, and how to report
- **PRACTICE!** One of the most important steps in planning for an emergency is to practice for the emergency

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The only way to know if the procedures in your plan being taught to the employees is if you practice them. Practicing and running drills lets you know if there are concerns not covered by your plan, or if the procedures developed work, or need to be reconsidered. Practicing the plan is how you know if employees know and understand your emergency procedures. Employees sitting in a class hearing your emergency procedure training will not guarantee they know or understand the training.

Your Emergency Action Plans are living documents that need to be reviewed, taught and practiced annually. Practicing your plans with your employees builds their confidence in what to do in the event of an emergency and saves lives.

For additional information on this topic or to obtain an EAP template, please contact us at riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com.