

Emergency Action Plans

Is your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) ready for Cal/OSHA scrutiny? How do you know? Easy targets for Cal/OSHA is for a company's failure to have a written, well thought out emergency action plan in place. Failure to do so can cost lives, livelihoods, and even without an accident lead employers directly to large fines from Cal/OSHA. Cal/OSHA issues citations for not having a written plan (Title 8, section 3220). Keep in mind that your EAP also may need to include emergency preparation and response for Heat Illness Prevention.

Cal/OSHA will cite not only the lack of a written emergency action plan, but also for each element the program fails to include. Having only posted evacuation maps and a list of who to call in the event of an emergency is NOT an emergency action plan.

What Should You Do –

Consider conducting a “risk” (threat) assessment to determine what manmade or natural emergencies and disasters will affect your company. Include what is affected and how. Without this, your plan will have little to no effectiveness. Plans should be specific for your company: do not use template programs or something another company uses as these will most likely not apply to your emergency situations.

Your written emergency action plan must be tested, reviewed and updated at least once a year. Annual evacuation drills and monthly tests of emergency equipment can provide insight and opportunity to improve responses and communication. Remember, you can't plan for a crisis when you're having one.

Don't forget to assess potentially hazardous situations and take steps to mitigate the risk. If your company stores chemicals in a building on the premises, keep an inventory of the chemicals, hazards they pose if released, and where they're located. Also, earthquake prone areas need to have plans that include knowing where gas and water lines are for quick shut off.

It's important to think a process through. For instance, if employees are evacuated, where do they go? What about visitors and sub-contractors working at your location? Are they following your EAP or do they have a different plan? Who's in charge of taking roll once the evacuation has occurred? Answering questions like this and planning for the potential will help you be prepared, minimize loss and possibly even save you insurance costs because you're ready.

For questions or assistance, contact Boretti, Inc at (559) 372-7545 or info@borettiinc.com

