



Emergency Action Plans

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BACKGROUND

While every employer tries to provide a safe working environment, the timber industry is notoriously dangerous due to the nature of the work. In every step of the supply chain, there are dangers that are both seen and unseen. While employers try to mitigate the dangers as much as possible, there is always a risk of an emergency, and it is important to plan for the worst-case scenario.

OSHA (29 CFR 1910.38(a)) agrees and requires that Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) be developed to ensure that the employer and employees are able to react appropriately in the event that there is an emergency. These plans should be designed with the specifics of the business in place. A logger will have different types of emergencies and responses than a mill or an office. These action plans help prepare employees to respond to an emergency because they are trained and know the measures employers put in place to take care of employees. EAPs will vary based on the business types, potential risks, geographical location, and emergency management resources. These action plans should identify potential emergency conditions and specify preplanned actions to help manage the emergency.

WHAT MAKES UP AN EAP?

An EAP requires many different parts to show that the employer has evaluated the potential risks in the workplace and has identified:

- Evacuation procedures that describe the evacuation type and identify exit routes.
 - Employees should always know at least two exit options from their specific location as well as the location for all employees to meet before being dismissed.

- Procedures that account for all employees after they evacuate to prevent emergency personnel from mounting a rescue mission for an employee, vendor, or visitor that has left the site before being dismissed.
- Procedures for reporting emergencies, including contact information for emergency services and company personnel.
- Procedures for shutting down critical operations and equipment before evacuation or during an incident to prevent further damage or dangerous situations for rescue personnel.
- Procedures for rescues and medical duties.
- Names or job titles of employees to contact in the event of an emergency.
- A clear communication system for all personnel so that employees understand the situation and their assigned responsibilities.
- Designated, trained employees to assist in evacuations or emergency situations.
- Annual training for all employees to ensure understanding.

In addition to knowing evacuation procedures and routes, it is important to think of additional emergency actions that are specific to the type of business. For example, if an incident occurs in a facility, such as a fire, it may be necessary to involve outside emergency personnel who are not familiar with the onsite dangers.

Personnel should be trained to help emergency personnel onsite so that the outside personnel are aware of onsite dangers and emergency precautions are taken to protect personnel and equipment.



This Safety Alert analyzes an injury in accordance with the chain of events represented by the five dominoes above. Pioneer industry safety experts H.W. Heinrich and Alfred Lateiner developed this accident analysis system to provide a graphic sense of how injuries can be avoided. Their methodology has been accepted by safety professionals worldwide.

Safety Meeting Report

Topic(s) Discussed:

Comments / Recommendations:

Date:

Company:

Names of Employees Attending:

Meeting Conducted by:

Please follow equipment manufacturers' recommendations for safe operation and maintenance procedures.

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Another example of using the EAP would be for a logger that is deep in the woods that has a catastrophic accident. As part of the emergency action plan, sending an employee out to meet the emergency personnel and guide them to the job site may be helpful.

EXAMPLES OF THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EAP

As a former Division Safety Manager for a wood products company, I've seen the importance of an Emergency Action Plan firsthand and can share some examples of how these plans have functioned and the importance of having a fully trained staff to implement these plans.

A few years ago, there was a fire at one of the facilities that I oversaw while we were hosting a tour of the facility. While we were on the tour, a fire broke out in one of the machine centers that required the facility to do an emergency abort to contain the fire. We heard the facility alarm, and a call went out over the radio to all mill personnel to let them know about the fire and the need to implement the EAP. Our tour guide received the notification over his radio and immediately proceeded to bring the tour group back to the main evacuation site. Meanwhile, trained employees went to guide the emergency personnel onsite and assist in responding to the fire. Due to the nature of the facility, these employees are trained to respond to fires because they have the knowledge of the machine centers that will allow the emergency personnel to effectively deal with the fire. The EAP worked effectively in this situation because the employees were prepared to respond to the fire resulting in minimal damage to the machinery and no injuries sustained.

In another incident at a different facility, there was an earthquake, which is not a normal occurrence in the PNW. The earthquake happened during the swings shift, meaning that the management leadership team was not onsite at the time. The facility had done training on the EAP, and when the earthquake occurred, all personnel onsite went through the EAP by placing all machinery in a safe configuration and evacuating to the outdoor meeting location.

Once all personnel were accounted for, the onsite team assessed the worksite to determine if there were any hazards that resulted from the earthquake. It was determined that there was no damage, and all personnel could return to work safely.

LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT IMPLEMENTING EAPS

- Having a well-trained workforce to respond to the incident is essential to reduce potential injuries and damage.
- A clear communication system is essential, so employees know how and what to do in their response.
- An EAP needs to adapt to circumstances, such as an earthquake in a unique location, or an injury in a unique location.
- It is important to ensure that the onsite team is trained to implement the EAP no matter the circumstances.
- A safety orientation at the beginning of employment makes sure that new employees are aware of the EAP and can act accordingly when an emergency happens.
- Having employees at the entrance to guide emergency personnel into the site is extremely important to make sure that they do not park in a dangerous area and are more efficient in addressing the emergency.
- An incident management system is important so that employees and emergency personnel know who is in charge at the site.
- A phone tree is a great way to make sure that upper management is aware of the situation for reporting purposes.

CONCLUSION

EAPs are an essential part of the safety program for any business. By preparing employees to act in an emergency, employers and businesses can mitigate the impact of an emergency and reduce damage and the potential loss of life and limb. These plans are beneficial because they help employees to be prepared for multiple circumstances that may occur onsite.



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