

Risk Control Guide

EMERGENCY ORGANISATION

Introduction and Scope

A well-organised Emergency Response can make a huge difference to the damage sustained and subsequent business interruption if a fire or other incident occurs. Key to an effective Emergency Response is a properly prepared Emergency Response Plan with a defined team whose members carry out specific roles before, during and after an emergency, and work as a team to minimise the potential loss to a business.

Life safety is of course the key aspect of emergency response and must take priority over property protection where conflicts occur. This document does not cover life safety aspects such as evacuation, but it is recognised those aspects must take priority.

Flood Emergency Response Plans and plans for other natural hazards such as earthquake and windstorm are not covered in detail in this document but are important as emergency response planning for such events can make a significant difference to the damage and interruption sustained.

Developing an Emergency Organisation and Plan

A key factor is for Senior Management to take overall responsibility for the Emergency Response and Organisation. They may nominate appropriate personnel to manage and review procedures, training and effectiveness but should retain oversight. The Senior Manager or nominated person should develop and manage the Emergency Response Plan and Team by working with site personnel such as HSE, Engineering, Maintenance and Department Managers to:

- 1) Understand and prioritise site hazards and exposures, such as risks from combustible construction, combustible storage, hazardous materials, hazardous processes, external exposures (e.g. exposing burning yard storage or buildings) and natural hazard exposures such as flood, earthquake, wind and snow loading.
- 2) Understand critical mitigating loss control features for each of the prioritised hazards and exposures such as fire protection and detection systems, construction features such as fire walls and doors/shutters, equipment safety controls and shut-downs, utility shut-downs, firefighting equipment such as hydrants, hoses and nearby accessible open bodies of water, and natural hazard protection features (e.g. flood barriers, sand bags, earthquake shut-off valves, freeze protection, etc.).
- 3) Develop potential scenarios associated with each of the prioritised hazards/exposures. Scenarios should include failure of the key loss control features.
- 4) Develop initial (pre-fire brigade attendance) response activities, roles and responsibilities that can help to reduce damage.
- 5) Assess the response/capabilities of the local fire brigade and ensure adequate pre-planning is completed.
- 6) Develop and manage the Emergency Response Plan based on the above, including specific strategies for prioritised hazards and exposures.
- 7) Develop salvage and recovery strategies for each scenario.
- 8) Develop and manage training needs including personnel training and plan drills/exercises.
- 9) Ensure learning from previous incidents and near-misses.

Emergency Response Plan

The Emergency Response Plan is a key document to record and manage the Emergency Organisation. Key features of the plan should include:

- **Scope** including the plan purpose, objectives and limitations.
- **Policy** including definition of senior management commitment.
- **Roles and Responsibilities** including clear actions to complete by specific personnel (or job roles).
- **Scenarios** based on the output of reviews done during the plan development and detailing clear actions needed along with roles and responsibilities.
- **Plan management** such as reviews, audits, adaptations following changes and training reviews.

Key Roles and Responsibilities

An Emergency Response Team must be defined with clear roles and responsibilities to be taken in an emergency. Each role must have deputies to cover periods of absence and all shifts, where this is practical.

The following can be key roles and responsibilities for many commercial properties:

- **Person-in-Charge (or Emergency Response Team Leader):** This person takes overall charge during an incident, ensures all nominated personnel are completing their defined roles and responsibilities and directs them as needed. The person should also be involved in the development of the Emergency Response Plan as described above.
- **Fire Brigade Notifier:** This person is responsible for ensuring the fire brigade are called. This role can be given to security personnel at sites that are occasionally unmanned other than for security personnel. *This role is very important even if an automated call is made via the site fire alarm system, as automated calls can fail (for example if they are left isolated unintentionally) and some fire brigades respond differently to fires that have been confirmed by a manual phone call. Additionally, there have been cases where people assume a call has been made when there is a general instruction to call the fire brigade resulting in no call being made. Remember that multiple calls are better than no calls.*
- **Utilities Operator:** This person is responsible for ensuring utilities are isolated. It can be necessary to separate the role into a person responsible for isolating electrical supplies and a person responsible for isolating gas and flammable fuel supplies. The people assigned must know the location of shut-off switches and how to operate them safely. Other utilities that may be important to define isolation roles for include HVAC and compressed air supplies.
- **Sprinkler Valve Operator:** This person is responsible for attending sprinkler control valves in the case of a fire or sprinkler activation and ensuring the valves are fully open until instructed to close the valve by the Person-in-Charge or the Fire Brigade. *Note this role is often not safe to complete if sprinkler valves are located inside the building (ideally valves are accessible from outside the fire area).*
- **Fire Pump Operator:** This person attends the fire pumps in the case of a fire or sprinkler system activation, checks the fire pumps have started automatically and starts them manually if not, then keeps the pumps operating until instructed otherwise by the Person-in-Charge or the Fire Brigade.
- **Firefighting Team:** Trained personnel who tackle a fire in its incipient stages, for example using firefighting extinguishers or hoses, prior to the arrival of the fire brigade.

Note that in addition to the above roles it is important that **Process Operators** of hazardous equipment are trained how to safely shut-down equipment in an emergency and are authorised to do this without reproach. This is in addition to automatic shut-offs, such as those linked to operation of the fire alarm.

Note that smaller facilities may not have sufficient personnel to cover all roles and some roles may not be deemed safe to complete due to life safety reasons. Roles that may have life safety implications can sometimes be defined as 'only to be completed if safe to do so'.

Site Plan

It is important to have a readily available scaled site plan(s) that details site layout, hazards and fire protection equipment, plus any other information that may make an emergency response more efficient and prompt. The site plan(s) should be provided to the Fire Brigade prior to any incident occurring and should also be kept in a location on site that would be readily available in an emergency (such as at a gatehouse or wall mounted premises information box). The plan(s) should be to scale and should include details of:

- Internal building layouts.
- Locations and details of construction, such as fire-rated construction such as concrete and combustible construction such as unapproved insulated sandwich panels or polystyrene insulation.
- Locations and ratings of fire walls, doors and shutters.
- Locations of hazardous processes and storage, such as combustible storage, fuel tanks, gas tanks, gas cylinders, hazardous process equipment, etc.
- Locations of utility and hazardous process shut-offs such as main electrical isolation switch, main gas isolation valves, main fuel supply shut-off valves, etc.
- Fire protection sprinkler system block plans including locations of sprinkler control valves, fire pump houses and fire water tanks.
- Locations of fire suppression systems.
- Hydrant locations.
- Locations of fire detection systems.

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