

Emergency Management Planning

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For businesses today, the list of possible events that can disrupt daily operations is never-ending, from natural disasters to workplace violence. Having a plan in place for dealing with unexpected emergencies can help to prevent the loss of life and control injury to people and damage to property. An emergency management plan is a coordinated response to such unexpected emergencies. There is no “one size fits all” plan. Tailoring the plan to the organization is essential.

Closely related is a business continuity plan which outlines a series of steps on how to continue business functions during an emergency. With a business continuity plan in place, personnel follow a logistical plan to recover and restore critical interrupted functions. The development process for either an emergency management plan or business continuity plan can be broken down into similar components.

The development of an emergency management plan has four main components:

Establish a Planning Team

To get started, determine who is in charge of developing the emergency management plan. An effective way of increasing personnel input is to have representation on the planning team from all departments. The size of the planning team will depend on the organization's operations, requirements and resources.

Analyze Capabilities and Hazards

The next step for the planning team is to gather information about the organization's current capabilities for handling emergencies and developing a list of possible emergency events. The team should review internal plans and policies to help determine the organization's means to handle various emergency events. Such documents include: employee manuals, fire protection plans, environmental policies and security procedures. During this step, the team should also develop a list of critical operations. Developing this list will assist the team to determine the needed resources during an emergency. It is impossible to plan for an emergency event if the impact on the organization is unknown.

Once the team has determined the organization's current capabilities, the focus turns to identifying potential emergency events. This would include all emergencies that could affect the organization's facility and the community.

Develop the Plan

After determining current capabilities and potential emergencies, the team can utilize this information to develop the plan. The plan should include the following basic components: executive summary, emergency management objective, emergency response procedures and supporting documentation.

The executive summary provides a brief overview of the plan including possible emergency events, policies and procedures, and the location where the response operations will be managed. The emergency management objective section should outline the organization's approach to emergency management. Following the organization's approach to emergency management, the next section of the plan should contain emergency response policies and procedures. Supporting documentation should be placed at the conclusion of the plan. This would include documents that could be needed in an emergency (i.e. emergency call lists, building and site maps).

Implement the Plan

The implementation phase is the execution of the plan. But implementation is more than executing the plan during an emergency. This phase includes integrating the plan into the organization's operations, training employees, drills, evaluation and maintenance of the plan. All personnel should know exactly what to do in the event of an emergency. Personnel input during the planning process, as well as open communication during implementation will help to increase the plan's acceptance.

The West Virginia Board of Risk and Insurance Management offers guidance to assist our insured who are interested in implementing plans and procedures that can help to prevent the loss of life and control injury to people and damage to property should an emergency event occur at a workplace.

References:

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

www.osha.gov

Board of Risk and Insurance Management Sample Loss Control Manual

<http://www.state.wv.us/brim/Loss/losscntl.htm>