

Emergency response planning overview

Being prepared can save lives

Though everyone hopes there will never be an emergency on their worksite, it is always important to go over the basics of responding to an emergency ahead of time. Without adequate preparation, planning, and even practice, the workers on site may not be ready to act when an emergency happens. Valuable time may be lost if proper plans haven't been made or people don't know what to do.

In Canada we have an Emergency Preparedness Week in May, and the United States has an Emergency Response Month in September. Both countries use these times to remind us all that we need to be prepared. When everything is going well, we tend to forget the importance of planning for when things go wrong. And when things go wrong, it's too late to start making a plan—we need to be able to act quickly.

This article is intended to help your company plan for an emergency. If you already have a plan, it can help you check that it is up-to-date, as well as remind you to train those who will need to follow the plan.

Emergency procedures

Ontario's Construction Projects regulation requires the constructor to establish emergency response procedures for every project and ensure they are followed (O. Reg. 213/91, s.17). The constructor must also review the emergency procedures with the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) or Health and Safety Representative and post them in a conspicuous place at the project. This means that the planning for emergencies must begin before any work starts on the project.



A quick and efficient response to an emergency will

- prevent the present situation from getting worse
- protect workers and the public from further danger and injury
- provide first aid to injured workers
- protect material and equipment from further damage
- isolate and secure the area to ensure that nothing is disturbed.

Emergency response plan

Every organization needs a practical emergency plan in order to minimize the injuries and property damage that may result from incidents and emergencies such as fires, explosions, toxic chemical spills, gas leaks, and natural disasters. Emergency plans are based on the best available information about possible emergencies and the harm they could cause to people and property.

An emergency response plan should cover all possibilities. It should ensure the safety of individuals and, if possible, the protection of property. The following topics should be included in your plan:

- Hazard identification and assessment
- Emergency resources
- Communication systems
- Administration of the plan
- Emergency response procedures
- Communication of the procedures (training)
- Debriefing and post-traumatic stress procedures

The emergency plan should also identify responsibilities and any specialized training needed by those on site, such as high-angle rescue or containment of hazardous materials.

Emergency



Tips for emergency planning

- Keep your plan up-to-date and post it in several places on the worksite. When a plan changes or is updated, inform everyone who may be affected.
- Some constructors and contractors hand out emergency response cards to workers after they receive jobsite orientations. The cards generally include
 - a general overview of the plan
 - emergency contact numbers
 - assembly or muster areas (i.e., where everyone should gather for head counts)
 - instructions, resources, etc., that will help the worker react safely in the event of an emergency.
- Put a review of the emergency response plan in your rotation of safety talks.
- Test the plan—Emergency plan drills will help you evaluate the plan and show where improvements are needed or something has been missed.

How IHSA can help

IHSA is committed to the reduction of injuries and fatalities in the workplace. We have several resources available to help you put together an emergency response plan for your company. The *Emergency Response Planning for Construction Projects* booklet (B030) can be downloaded from our website. As well, you can order our *Emergency Response Poster* (P103) and post it on your jobsite.

IHSA also has a **Policy and Program Resources** section on the website with templates to help you develop or update your company's health and safety program. Visit the emergency preparedness page to find checklists, guidelines, templates, and links to other emergency planning materials:

ihsa.ca/resources/emergency_preparedness.aspx

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Have a Plan

FIRE	POLICE	AMBULANCE
		
LOCAL EMERGENCY NUMBER		

SITE LOCATION Name of Superintendent Phone: After-hours Phone: Name of First Aid Person Gas Hydro Water Telecommunication Poison Control 1-800-268-9017 Ministry of Labour Ministry of the Environment 1-800-268-6060 Nearest Hospital Other	HOSPITAL (Insert map of nearest hospital location.)
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1-800-263-5024

P103

Post IHSA's *Emergency Response Poster* (P103) on your jobsite