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Since 2008

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Fire Safety

Employers should train workers about fire hazards in the workplace and about what to do in a fire emergency. If you want your workers to evacuate, you should train them on evacuation procedures. If you expect your workers to use fire fighting equipment, you should provide the appropriate equipment and train workers to use it safely. (See Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1910 Subparts E and L; and Part 1926 Subparts C and F.)

What actions should employers take to help ensure safe evacuations of buildings?

Every workplace must have enough exits suitably located to enable everyone to get out of the facility quickly. Considerations include the type of structure, the number of persons exposed, the fire protection available, the type of industry involved, and the height and type of construction of the building or structure. In addition, exit doors must not be blocked or locked when employees are inside. Delayed opening of exit doors, however, is permitted when an approved alarm system is integrated into the exit door design. Exit routes from buildings must be free of obstructions and properly marked with exit signs. See 29 CFR Part 1910.36 for details about these requirements.

Do employers have to provide portable fire extinguishers?

No. But if you do, you must establish an educational program to familiarize your workers with the general principles of fire extinguisher use. If you expect your workers to use portable fire extinguishers, you must provide hands-on training in using this equipment. For details, see 29 CFR Part 1910 Subpart L.

Must employers develop emergency action plans?

Not every employer is required to have an emergency action plan. OSHA standards that require such plans include the following:

- Process Safety Management of Highly Hazardous Chemicals – 1910.119
- Fixed Extinguishing Systems, General – 1910.160
- Fire Detection Systems – 1910.164

- Grain Handling – 1910.272
- Ethylene Oxide – 1910.1047
- Methylenedianiline – 1910.1050
- 1,3 Butadiene – 1910.1051

When required, employers must develop an emergency action plan that:

- Describes the routes for workers to use and procedures to follow.
- Accounts for all evacuated employees.
- Remains available for employee review.
- Includes procedures for evacuating disabled employees.
- Addresses evacuation of employees who stay behind to shut down critical plant equipment.
- Includes preferred means of alerting employees to a fire emergency.
- Provides for an employee alarm system throughout the workplace.
- Requires an alarm system that includes voice communication or sound signals such as bells, whistles, or horns.
- Makes the evacuation signal known to employees.
- Ensures the provision of emergency training.
- Requires employer review of the plan with new employees and with all employees whenever the plan is changed.

Must employers have a fire prevention plan?

OSHA standards that require fire prevention plans include the following:

- Ethylene Oxide – 1910.1047
- Methylenedianiline – 1910.1050
- 1,3 Butadiene – 1910.1051

Employers covered by these standards must implement plans to minimize the frequency of evacuations. All fire prevention plans must:

- Be available for employee review.
- Include housekeeping procedures for storage and cleanup of flammable materials and flammable waste.
- Address handling and packaging of flammable waste. (Recycling of flammable waste such as paper is encouraged.)
- Cover procedures for controlling workplace ignition sources such as smoking, welding and burning.
- Provide for proper cleaning and maintenance of heat producing equipment such as burners, heat exchangers, boilers, ovens, stoves, and fryers and require storage of flammables away from this equipment.
- Inform workers of the potential fire hazards of their jobs and plan procedures.
- Require review of the fire prevention plan with all new employees and with all employees whenever the plan is changed.

What are the rules for fixed extinguishing systems?

Fixed extinguishing systems throughout the workplace are among the most reliable fire fighting tools. These systems detect fires, sound an alarm, and apply water or another extinguishing agent to the fire.

To meet OSHA standards, employers who have fixed extinguishing systems must:

- Substitute (temporarily) a fire watch of trained employees to respond to fire emergencies when a fire suppression system is out of service.
- Ensure that the fire watch is included in the fire prevention plan and the emergency action plan.

This is one in a series of informational fact sheets highlighting OSHA programs, policies or standards. It does not impose any new compliance requirements. For a comprehensive list of compliance requirements of OSHA standards or regulations, refer to Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations. This information will be made available to sensory-impaired individuals upon request. The voice phone is (202) 693-1999; teletypewriter (TTY) number: (877) 889-5627.

- Post signs for systems that use gaseous agents (e.g., carbon dioxide, clean agents, etc.) posing a serious health hazard.

Workers' Rights

Workers have the right to:

- Working conditions that do not pose a risk of serious harm.
- Receive information and training (in a language and vocabulary the worker understands) about workplace hazards, methods to prevent them, and the OSHA standards that apply to their workplace.
- Review records of work-related injuries and illnesses.
- File a complaint asking OSHA to inspect their workplace if they believe there is a serious hazard or that their employer is not following OSHA's rules. OSHA will keep all identities confidential.
- Exercise their rights under the law without retaliation, including reporting an injury or raising health and safety concerns with their employer or OSHA. If a worker has been retaliated against for using their rights, they must file a complaint with OSHA as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days.

For additional information, see [OSHA's Workers page \(www.osha.gov/workers\)](http://www.osha.gov/workers).

How to Contact OSHA

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to help ensure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education, and assistance. For more information, visit www.osha.gov or call OSHA at 1-800-321-OSHA (6742), TTY 1-877-889-5627.



U.S. Department of Labor

