

18—Planning for Emergencies

a safeguard fails? What if the container cracks and substances leak out?

In addition to normal hazards, are there potential chemical reactions with other substances that cause still further dangers to people and property?

Chemical hazards are discussed in Chapters, 37, 38, and 39

Weather extremes

Throughout a year there may be some unusually severe and unexpected weather events that may require some changes in normal operations. Some examples follow.

In North Dakota, the temperature may occasionally drop to 35 degrees below zero, yet most activities and travel are not normally affected. But, if the wind increases in strength or the temperature drops suddenly, there may be a need to assist people in travel or other outside activity. A special alert might be made to employees prior to leaving from work. And often when or how they are to be notified about the company opening in the morning.

On the other hand, in the event of extremely heavy snowfall, what changes might be made in operations? What should employees be told prior to leaving for home?

Or suppose an unusually heavy rain strands hundreds of customers in a store just a few minutes before closing. Are supervisors and clerks prepared to handle the situation? May they allow telephone calls in and out? How do they control the crowd?

Hail or wind may start breaking glass windows while customers are shopping. What is the immediate action?

Suppose that adverse weather caused a power failure or someone suddenly shut off all power and lights while crowds were shopping? The emergency lighting system may operate as intended but employees, particularly key supervisors, must understand emergency plans and be prepared to act responsibly.

Plan-of-Action Considerations

Following the assessment of potential emergencies, the next step is to translate these needs into a plan of action. Management should be in charge of drafting a policy and

getting the plan underway. It will usually be necessary that the union leaders (if any) be involved in the planning process. Generally, someone should be appointed emergency planning director or coordinator, perhaps with help from an advisory committee. Usually because of their experience and training, the safety, medical, fire, and security departments will be involved. Of course, because production and maintenance will be affected, they must be consulted. Also, the legal staff needs to be aware of the plan.

And finally, contacts with local law-enforcement agencies, fire, and civil defense are necessary.

Program considerations

The cost and effort involved in giving immediate attention to emergency planning can be justified by weighing the cost of preparedness against the possibility of contributing to the yearly losses from accidents, fires, floods and other catastrophes.

The preliminary aspects of emergency planning have now been discussed—the need for advance planning and an evaluation of the type of emergencies and their potential harm to people and property. The next step, then, is to translate this need into a working plan within the organizational structure. In some cases, this requires working with other local agencies to most fully protect your operations.

Advance planning is the key. It is necessary to develop a written set of plans for action. The plans should be developed locally within the company (and corporate structure) and be in cooperation with other neighboring or similar organizations and with governmental agencies. It may not always be possible for them to fully cooperate or participate, but through planned action each organization should be aware of certain available assistances. And as a result, the company may need to plan to be largely dependent upon its own resources to provide the internal safety.

Often an emergency manual or handbook will be developed for the plant or organization. The following outline covers many of the items that might be included, but other items may be needed as dictated by the expected emergencies and the available resources.

1. Company policy, purposes, authority, prin-