

# **Comprehensive Emergency Preparedness for the Hotel Industry**

## **Developing an On-site Emergency Action Plan**

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*An emergency, by its very nature, is an unplanned event that can cause death or significant injury to employees, customers, or the public; or that can shut down a business, disrupt operations, cause physical or environmental damage, or that can threaten the facility's financial standing or public image. Numerous events such as fires, hurricanes, and explosions constitute emergencies. Therefore, it is the scope of this action plan to address and plan for these potential emergent situations. Elements such as site security and "normal" operating procedures will factor into this planning process. However, this guide is not intended to structure or establish the non-emergent procedure necessary for daily operations in the hospitality industry.*

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### ➤ ***The First Consideration - Why Plan?***

- 1) As a response to September 11th
- 2) Traditional considerations that still constitute the most practical reasons why an effective and comprehensive emergency action plan should exist for any business:
  - a) Protection of life and property
  - b) A moral responsibility to protect employees, the community and the environment
  - c) Facilitates compliance with various regulatory requirements
  - d) Enhances recovery ability if the initial damage is minimized by good planning
  - e) Can reduce exposure to civil or criminal liability in the event of an incident
  - f) Enhances image and creditability with employees, suppliers, the community, and potential customers

### ➤ ***The Logistics of Establishing a Facility Specific Emergency Action Plan***

- 1) Establish a planning team to obtain a broad perspective and consider all facets of hotel operation. Include: all levels of management, human resources, health & safety, engineering and maintenance, public relations, security, communications, sales & marketing, legal, and finance.
- 2) Gather any existing strategies, plans, or company policies to include, update, or discard in conjunction with the new emergency management strategy. Reference security procedures, health and safety manual, employee handbook, etc. Also ascertain the existence of any risk management plans or loss prevention strategies.

- 3) Determine availability of planning help from outside resources. These resources include: the local office of emergency management, the mayor's office, fire department, police department, or The American Red Cross.
- 4) Assess the type and extent of risk to your particular industry considering current world political climate, the location of your establishment, your customer base, high profile events you may host, who your neighbors are, historical emergencies, geography, human error, and the facilities physical construction.

➤ ***Essential Elements of an Emergency Action Plan***

- 1) Plan overview:
  - a) Purpose of the plan/Mission Statement
  - b) Emergency Management Policy
  - c) Authority and responsibility of key personal
  - d) The scope of emergent situations this plan covers
- 2) Building and site maps that clearly indicate:
 

Utility shutoffs	Water hydrants	Water main valves
Water lines	Gas main valves	Gas lines
Electrical cutoffs	Electrical substations	Storm drains
Sewer lines	Floor plans	Alarms
Fire extinguishers	Fire suppressions systems	Exits
Stairways	Designated escape routes	Restricted areas
Hazardous materials	High value items	
- 3) Emergency contact systems
  - a) Maintain a current listing of direct contact numbers for the local police precinct, fire department, emergency medical service, and hospital. The local 911 system is ideal for immediate reporting of an occurrence, but additional communication may be necessary.
  - b) Maintain a current listing of contact information for key personnel that may need to be notified to respond to an on site emergency during off hours
  - c) Establish emergency contact information for all employees
  - d) Institute a procedure to inform family member's of employees about the scope of the emergent situation
  - e) Create provisions to receive emergency or disaster warnings in the event of a power failure
  - f) Appoint a media liaison to handle all inquires from the press
- 4) Chain of command
  - a) This structure is designed to install confidence and avoid panic by establishing a clear line of authority that will manage the situation
  - b) Can consist of a single decision-maker or constitute a crisis management team
  - c) Alternates should be listed in the event of vacations, off business hours, etc.
  - d) This line should mirror the regular structure of authority within a facility
  - e) Identify the responsibility and function of key positions within departments.

- 5) Establish a command center
  - a) A single designated area with communication abilities within the facility and to the outside world
  - b) As an additional contingency establish an area off site that may serve the same function in the event of a total evacuation of catastrophe
  
- 6) Identify a system for reporting emergencies
  - a) At a minimum each employee should be responsible for reporting any potential or actual emergencies he/she discovers within the premises.
  - b) Establish a system by which individual employees will notify their supervisors or other management personnel who will in turn notify the chain of command.
  
- 7) Identify the type of warning or notification system that is unique and present throughout the entire premises
  - a) This system will notify both employees and customers of an emergent situation
  - b) Identify any backups or fail safes for this system
  - c) Indicate the regular course of maintenance and tests to ensure proper functioning
  
- 8) Emergency evacuation procedures
  - a) Identify primary and secondary evacuation routes from each section of the building
  - b) A regular review of exit doors and evacuation routes for proper signage and lighting
  - c) Determine any shut down procedures of critical or sensitive operations if circumstances allow
  - d) Establish method of emergency notification
  - e) Assign designated employees the role of manning exit doors and stairwells to ensure an orderly evacuation.
  - f) Designate an employee assembly area
  - g) Design a procedure to account for all employees
  - h) Measures to ensure the safe evacuation of physically challenged customers and employees – these measures could include maintaining an occupancy list of the guest rooms designed for the disabled, and assign buddies to physically challenged employees
  
- 9) Protection of vital records
  - a) If duplicate records are not maintained off-site or housed in computer memory, establish a protocol to remove vital data in the event of an evacuation
  
- 10) First Aid Kits
  - a) Indicate the location and contents inventory of first aid kits throughout the building

➤ **Site Security**

- 1) Initiate procedures for positive identification, admission, and control of employees and other personnel into the facility during an emergent situation
- 2) Establish provisions for directing, controlling, and limiting traffic to provide for orderly movement of emergency response vehicles

➤ **Potential Emergent Situations**

*Each of these scenarios should be evaluated for probability, risk, and destructive potential. The response capability of an individual facility should be addressed as well. Then building off the essential elements and procedures established by this plan develop specific protocols to be enacted in the event of each situation.*

- 1) Utility Failure – (partial or total; internal or external)
- 2) Hazards Related to Nature
  - a) High winds – (hurricanes, tornadoes, thunderstorms, hail, lightning, etc.)
  - b) High waters – (heavy rainfall, floods, etc.)
  - c) Winter storms – (blizzards, heavy snowfall, freezing rain, ice storms, etc.)
  - d) Earthquakes
- 3) Emergencies of Civil Origin – (demonstrations, riots, labor disputes, general strikes, etc.)
- 4) Bomb Threats
- 5) Fire and Explosions
- 6) Gas Leaks – (inside and outside the premises)
- 7) Hazardous Materials Spills
- 8) Chemical Agents
- 9) Workplace Violence
- 10) Mass Medical Emergencies

➤ **Employee Training**

- 1) All employees are trained annually on the details of this plan and any specific responsibilities
  - a) Employees are informed of any new provisions or procedures that are added to this plan
  - b) New hire receive training before the commencement of work
  - c) Training elements at a minimum should include:
    - I. Individual roles and responsibilities
    - II. Information about threats, hazards, and protective actions
    - III. Notification, warning, and communications procedures
    - IV. Emergency response procedures
    - V. Evacuation and accountability procedures