

Planning for Emergencies

Emergencies by their very nature occur with little or no warning and can have such dire consequences for both life and property that planning for such events is essential.

What is it?

When planning for emergencies, you should consider both emergencies of a general nature as well as those arising from the unique workplace situations present in a mineral products environment.

Think about those situations that might involve evacuation from part, or the whole site, which could involve visitors and contractors as well as the workforce. You should also consider those situations where the general public could be at risk if public roads or dwelling houses are close to the site boundary.

Examples of emergency situations common on worksites are:

- Leakage of liquid petroleum gas (LPG) or other potential dangerous gases
- Fire
- Flooding
- Accident
- Contamination of a watercourse
- Dust emissions to atmosphere

When carrying out your risk assessments to identify potential emergency situations, take into account the differences of the risk posed through daylight and night time hours. Also consider how the emergency response will differ if there is a power failure.

Relevant legislation and best practice

In the UK, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 covers emergency planning. These regulations place a general duty of care on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of

their employees while they are at work. This includes arrangements in connection with the use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances.

To meet the duty of care, employers must have policies and procedures in place for emergencies and evacuation from the workplace that include:

- Identification of where an emergency could arise through the undertaking of risk assessments.
- Procedures and protective measures for the recording of emergency and escape arrangements.
- Detailed requirements for serious and imminent danger emergency procedures.
- All necessary information on the risks to the health and safety of employees is provided for in respect of emergency and evacuation plans.
- The health and safety document demonstrates that the risks have been assessed and included in the emergency plan.
- The employer has a means of escape and rescue facilities that allows employees to leave the site in the event of an emergency.
- Emergency procedures are tested and emergency drills are carried out.
- Provision of emergency lighting.
- The employer has suitable and sufficient arrangements for the rescue of anyone entering the confined space.
- The provision of adequate first aid equipment and facilities.
- Emergency plans and procedures include the rescue of persons from heights and excavations.

Emergency Planning Procedures (EPP)

Beyond risk assessments you should ensure that you provide clear guidance to employees, contractors and visitors to your workplace about possible events that will stop work. These events might cause partial or full evacuation to a safe place.

The following points should help you in drawing up an Emergency Planning Procedure (EPP):

- ✓ The plan should be in writing, be as simple as possible, and provide the basis for necessary actions to take place.

- ✓ The emphasis must be on priority areas in order to control major problems.
- ✓ It should include information on the availability of staff on duty and the provision to recall staff.
- ✓ A list of key personnel with site/home phone numbers and addresses should be compiled, kept up to date, and circulated to managers and supervisors.
- ✓ A list of phone numbers for key contacts such as the health and safety regulator, gas and electricity boards, company doctor, company directors etc. that need to be informed of such incidents.
- ✓ A list of phone numbers of specialist companies providing emergency facilities for example: lighting and lifting equipment etc.

The EPP also needs to include these other important matters:

- ✓ The safe shutdown of plant and equipment.
- ✓ First aid treatment, facilities and equipment.
- ✓ Procedures to ensure that emergency services and first aiders can quickly identify and proceed to incident area.
- ✓ Provision for the counselling of injured persons or others affected by the incident.
- ✓ Nominated staff to notify relatives or next of kin, enforcing authorities and to deal with any media interest.
- ✓ Evacuation procedures.
- ✓ Any special procedures required for night or weekend shifts.

Some specific emergency situations may also be covered by specific health and safety regulations. Your procedures will also need to reflect any requirements of other regulations you may be affected by.

Information on the procedures should be made available to all employees and form part of any induction training. It would be advisable to carry out exercises so that everyone is aware of the procedures and to test their effectiveness. Periodic 'tool-box' talks could also be used to ensure that the workforce remains aware of the emergency procedures and, importantly, any changes.

Where different employers share a workplace, their separate emergency procedures should take account of others in the workplace and, as far as is appropriate, be co-ordinated.

For the benefit of the Emergency Services, who may not be familiar with the site, sketch maps can be provided at the entrance/weighbridge

or reception showing the location of important facilities such as fire hydrants, electrical sub-station and isolators, hazardous chemical stores, compressed gas stores, fuel tanks etc.

Why is it important to me?

It is difficult to prioritise planning for something that hopefully will never happen but those businesses that do take the time, find they are in a better position to cope with both the immediate dangers and their consequences. Having emergency planning procedures in place that are regularly reviewed and communicated to staff are not only essential to meet legal requirements but should be the aim of all responsible employers.

IQ believes that having effective emergency procedures is an important aspect of a well-managed site operating in today's quarrying and minerals products industry. It features on our **Skills Wheel** which captures all the key skill and knowledge areas we believe are vital to successful career development in the industry.

Where Next?

The Health and Safety Executive has good advice and further reading on preparing emergency plans. You can download HSE pdf documents free of charge or purchase books online.

Have a look at **Emergency Planning for Major Accidents: Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999:**

www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg191.htm

Institute of Quarrying

IQ supports professionals working within the quarrying and minerals products industry through membership and training. These factsheets are produced across a range of topics to share ideas and best practice. Further information can be found via the resources section on the IQ website www.quarrying.org.