

BIE SAFETY ADVISOR

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries Charts, 1992-2014, fires and explosions accounted for **3% of workplace fatalities in 2014**.

Fire safety becomes everyone's job at a worksite. Employers should train workers about fire hazards in the workplace and about what to do in a fire emergency. This plan should outline the assignments of key personnel in the event of a fire and provide an evacuation plan for workers on the site. In the construction industry, a "fire plan" should be set up prior to beginning any construction or demolition job. The following references aid in recognizing and evaluating hazards and possible solutions in the workplace.

What should employers do to protect workers from fire hazards?

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 how to escape. If you expect your workers to use firefighting equipment, you should give them appropriate equipment and train them to use the equipment safely. (See Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 1926 Subparts C and F.)

What does OSHA require for emergency fire exits?

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 systems available, the type of industry involved, and the height and type of construction of the building or structure. In addition, fire doors must not be blocked or locked when employees are inside. Exit routes from buildings must be free of obstructions and properly marked with exit signs.

Do employers have to provide portable fire extinguishers?

29 CFR 1926.150 outlines requirements for fire protection procedures and placement of fire extinguishers on a construction site. Employers are responsible for maintaining equipment, such as fire extinguishers, and for training employees on their use. The standard indicates that a fire extinguisher rated not less than 2A must be provided for each 3,000 square feet of a protected area with a travel distance not exceeding 100 feet. If employees are expected to use portable fire extinguishers they must be trained annually, including hands on demonstration. If the expectation is that workers will flee the building rather than use portable fire extinguisher than only an informational program must be provided to affected employees.

Emergency Action Plans

Employers must develop emergency action plans that should be site specific and address the following at a minimum:

- Emergency escape procedures and emergency escape route assignments;
- Procedures to account for all employees after emergency evacuation has been completed;
- Rescue and medical duties for those employees who are to perform them;
- The preferred means of reporting fires and other emergencies; and
- Names or regular job titles of persons or departments who can be contacted for further information or explanation of duties under the plan.



Monthly Toolbox Talk

Fire Protection and Control

Most fires are a result of inattention to the job site operations and surrounding conditions. This lack of attention or protection can result in the loss of life and property. All fires can be easily extinguished if caught soon enough and the proper extinguishing tools are handy.

Guide for Discussion

Steps to Remember When a Fire Starts:

- Call 911 and Sound the alarm—yell if necessary.
- Warn those near the fire.
- If possible and the fire is small, try to extinguish it. (This will be dependent on company policy and training)
- Call the Fire Department if the fire can't be easily and quickly extinguished.
- Evacuate the area if the fire can't be quickly extinguished.
- Direct the Fire Department to the area of the fire.

Be Sure to Know the Following:

- The Fire Department phone number. (911)
- Be sure you know the location of the nearest cross street to give the Fire Department directions.
- Where the fire extinguishers are and how to use them.
- How to evacuate the work area.

Steps to Prevent Fires

- Regularly inspect all fire extinguishers.
- Keep the work area free of debris and trash.
- Designate high-risk areas as “no smoking” areas. Enforce no smoking rules.
- Store flammable fuels and materials only in approved safety containers.
- Check temporary wiring and electrical tools for defects.

Additional Discussion Notes:

Where are the emergency numbers and job site location (including nearest cross streets) posted on the job?

If welding equipment is on the job, when is it regularly inspected?

Remember:

Knowing how to recognize, react to, or eliminate fire hazards can greatly decrease the chances of being exposed to a fire.

