

Fact Sheet No. 8

Making an Emergency Plan

If you employ more than five people you need to have a written emergency plan to ensure everyone in the workplace knows what to do if there is a fire, and can be evacuated safely. Here's a brief introduction to help get you started.

The basics of your Emergency Plan

Your emergency plan should provide clear instructions on:

- what action employees should take if they discover a fire;
- how the alarm will be raised;
- how people should evacuate the workplace;
- where they should assemble; and
- any special instructions, e.g. lifts, switching off machinery etc.

For some small workplaces the emergency plan may be covered by standard Fire Action notices.

Where appropriate you may also detail:

- the fire extinguishers provided;
- where the key escape routes are and how people can find them; and
- the names and specific duties of appointed people like First Aiders or Fire Marshals.

It's a good idea to assign Specific Emergency Duties to named individuals. That way, everyone is clear about their responsibilities. The list should include:

- who will contact the emergency services and how this is done (dial '9' for a line?);
- who liaises with the emergency services when they arrive;
- who checks the emergency services can get clear and easy access to the building;
- who is in overall charge of the situation;
- who should sweep the building (if necessary) for stragglers;
- who should take a roll call of the staff at the Assembly Point;
- who should monitor lifts, making sure they are not used; and stairs, in case people need direction or assistance;
- who is responsible for people with disabilities - remember, this does not just mean people in a wheelchair, it includes anyone who may need assistance making their way out of the building, e.g. pregnant ladies, the elderly, deaf, people prone to panic, people with young children etc.; and
- who is responsible for making dangerous materials safe like oxygen supplies, flammable liquid stores etc.

Train your staff

If you have visitors or contractors in your workplace you should pay special attention to ensuring they are aware of the emergency plan. Depending on the risks involved this may be as simple as providing fire action notices and an information card, or a short training session.

Training for your employees in the emergency plan is of course critical to its success. On their first day employees should be shown where all the fire exits are near to their place of work, how to raise the fire alarm and how to choose and use fire extinguishers.

People who work in high-risk areas should be given training that reflects the need. Remember your fire risk assessments: the greater the risk, the more detailed the training should be.

If you need more help and advice, please call us anytime.

