EMERGENCIES AT WORK

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

• List at least eight types of emergencies that can occur in a workplace.
• Explain what to do in at least three kinds of emergencies.
• Identify important information employers should provide about how to respond to workplace emergencies.

Time Needed: 30 Minutes

Materials Needed

• Handouts: Disaster Blaster Game board (A)
  Disaster Blaster Game cards (B)
  Emergencies in the News (C) – optional activity D
  Emergency Action Plans (D) – optional activity D
• One die for each table
• Game pieces (One per team)
• Prizes
• Flipchart & markers, or chalkboard & chalk
• PowerPoint Slide #1: Key Points: Emergencies at Work

Preparing To Teach This Lesson

Before you present this lesson:

1. Obtain a flipchart and markers or use a chalkboard and chalk.
2. Locate and review PowerPoint Slide #1. Copy onto a transparency if necessary.
3. For the Disaster Blaster game, copy Handout A (Disaster Blaster Game board), one for each table of four students. Also copy Handout B (Disaster Blaster Game cards), one for each table, and cut out cards so that each table has one deck of 33 cards. Obtain game pieces, dice, and prizes, enough for each table.
4. For the Emergencies in the News activity, copy Handouts C and D for each student.

Detailed Instructor’s Notes

A. Introduction: What is an emergency? (5 minutes)

1. An emergency is any unplanned event that threatens employees, customers, or the public; shuts down business operations; or causes physical or environmental damage.
2. Tell students that emergencies may be natural or human-caused.
Have students call out examples of emergency events; write their suggestions on the board. Your list may include the following:

- Severe illness or injury
- Tornadoes
- Explosions
- Fires
- Earthquakes
- Toxic releases
- Floods
- Power outages
- Terrorism
- Hurricanes
- Chemical spills
- Violence

3. Show PowerPoint Slide #1. Tell the class that the best way to minimize the effects of an emergency is to know ahead of time what to do if that kind of emergency occurs and then practice the proper procedures. Few people can think clearly and logically in a crisis, so it is important to think through the proper procedures in advance, when you have time to be thorough and to practice. Employers are responsible for telling employees what kinds of emergencies could happen in their workplace and what procedures should be followed for safety. OSHA requires employers to have an Emergency Action Plan that should include information on the following:
• What to do in different types of emergency
• Where shelters and meeting places are located
• Evacuation routes
• Emergency equipment and alert systems
• Procedures to follow when someone is injured or becomes ill
• Who is in charge during emergencies
• Employee responsibilities
• Practice drills.

Employees should receive training about these things and participate in the practice drills. We will spend more time talking about emergency preparedness, Emergency Action Plans, and what employees should expect from employers. If the school has a plan in place, quickly review the procedure for your classroom or building.

B. Disaster Blaster game (20 minutes)

1. Introduce the game. Explain that students will be paired up and will play a board game called Disaster Blaster against another pair of students at their table.

2. Divide the class into groups of four students and assign each group a table. Have each group split into two teams. Pass out Handout A (Disaster Blaster Game board), game pieces, a die, and one deck of Handout B (Disaster Blaster cards cut into 33 cards) to each table.

3. Explain the rules of the game. Tell students that the teams at each table should take turns rolling the die and moving ahead the number of spaces shown. Follow the instructions written on the spaces for moving around the game board. The arrows indicate the direction to move. When a team lands on a blank space, its turn is over.

Whenever a team's game piece lands on a Disaster Blaster square with a question mark (?), the opposing team picks a Disaster Blaster card from the top of the deck and reads the question on the card to the team whose turn it is. If that team's answer is basically correct, they move their game piece ahead one space. If they do not answer correctly, they remain on the square until their next turn. The opposing team should then read aloud the complete answer.

Explain that teams may not always know the “right” answer to a Disaster Blaster question, but should use their best judgment. They will learn correct answers while playing the game. The team reaching the finish first wins the game. They receive a prize.

4. Tell teams to begin playing the game. Visit tables to check that students understand the instructions. Distribute prizes to winning teams or play non-competitively and reward all with candy or other prizes. Safety supply companies or fire stations may donate stickers, pencils, erasers, etc. with safety slogans.
C. Review (5 minutes)

1. Tell students that this concludes our lesson on emergency preparedness. Remember that every workplace should have an Emergency Action Plan. The plan should include the following information and workers should be trained about it:
   - Who is in charge during an emergency;
   - Where the shelters and evacuation routes are;
   - Where the meeting places are;
   - What procedures to follow when someone is injured;
   - Where first-aid kits are;
   - Who has first aid training; and
   - How and when practice drills will be conducted.

Tell students they are entitled to this information whenever they start a new job.

Optional Activity

The following activity provides an additional opportunity for students to explore how to respond to different workplace emergency scenarios more in depth:

D. Emergencies in the news (25 minutes)

1. Tell students that advance planning for emergencies is essential. It can reduce the risk of injuries or death. Your employer should have a written Emergency Action Plan and you should be trained about what to do in the different kinds of emergencies that could occur. Regular practice drills should also be conducted.

Ask the class:

What would you want to know if you were in an emergency situation at work?

Possible answers might include the following:
   - What could happen in this emergency and how do I protect myself?
   - Will an alarm alert me to the emergency? What does it look or sound like?
   - Who is in charge during the emergency?
   - Where do I go to be safe? How do I get there?
   - If someone gets hurt, what should I do?
   - Who in the building knows first aid?
   - What are my responsibilities?
   - How will I know when the emergency is over?

2. Tell the class they will next work in small groups to read news stories about emergencies that occurred at work, learn how workers responded, and decide what could have been done better to protect workers and prepare them for future emergencies. The groups will present their ideas to the rest of the class.
3. Divide the class into small groups of 4-5 students. Distribute copies of Handouts C and D to each student. Handout C is a set of news stories. Handout D, *Emergency Action Plans*, describes key elements of emergency preparedness.

4. Assign a different news story from Handout C to each small group. Have groups select one person to lead his or her group’s discussion by reading aloud the assigned story and the questions at the end. Another student should write down the group’s responses to the questions. A third student may be designated to report the group’s responses to the class.

5. Give small groups approximately 15 minutes to read their story and answer the questions on Handout C. If they finish early, they may discuss the other news stories on the handout.

6. After 15 minutes, bring the class back together. Have the small groups report on their story, their evaluation of how the workers responded, and steps that could be taken in the workplace to better protect and prepare the workers. Make sure the points following each story are addressed in the small group’s presentation. If necessary, add them yourself.

**Story A: Grease Fire in Restaurant Burns Employee**

A fire erupted at Sunny’s Family Restaurant Tuesday night, critically injuring an employee and causing $100,000 worth of damage to the building. The fire was caused when a frying pan, filled with oil heating up on the stove, was left unattended. The fire rapidly spread to dish towels hanging nearby. An employee discovered the scene and attempted to put out the fire by pouring water on the stove, causing the burning grease to splatter his face, arms, and chest. A co-worker, hearing the commotion, called 911 and yelled for everyone to leave the restaurant immediately. The fire department arrived, extinguished the fire, and attended to the burned employee. The victim was taken to Mercy Hospital and is reported to be in serious but stable condition.

*What went right in this situation?*

- The co-worker called 911 and yelled for everyone to leave the restaurant immediately.

*What went wrong in this situation?*

- The cook should not have left the stove unattended.
- Dish towels should not be located so close to the stove.
- It doesn’t appear the employee who tried to put out the fire was trained.
- The employee should not have tried to put out the grease fire with water.
- A fire extinguisher or baking soda should be used on grease fires.
- It appears there was no smoke detector or sprinkler system.

*What steps should be taken in this workplace to make sure employees are better protected and prepared the next time?*

- A smoke detector with an alarm and a sprinkler system should be installed.
- Employees should be trained about the hazards of leaving a stove unattended, what type of fire extinguisher to use, how to use it, and to immediately leave the building if a fire begins to get out of control.
- Once everyone is out of the building, the fire department (911) should be called.
- Practice drills should be conducted so everyone knows the evacuation route and where to gather to be sure everyone got out of the building.
Story B: Robber Threatens Young Employee With Gun

A 16-year-old employee of a local convenience store was held up at gunpoint late Thursday night by a masked man demanding money. The employee was working alone and in the process of closing the store for the evening. The employee later reported to police that, after emptying the cash register, the robber tied him up and then left with the money. Although the young employee was shaken up by the incident, he was not physically injured. The name of the young employee is being withheld because of his age.

What went right in this situation?
- The employee cooperated with the robber, which probably kept him from being injured.

What went wrong in this situation?
- The robber was able to tie up the employee and rob the store because security measures weren’t in place.

What steps should be taken in this workplace to make sure employees are better protected and prepared the next time?
- Employees, especially young employees, shouldn’t be working alone at night.
- There should be a silent alarm in place that would signal police, or there should be a security guard.
- The store should be well lit and have a security camera.
- All employees need to be trained in how to respond during a robbery or other threat.

Story C: Parents Praise Quick Action of Local Teen Parents

Charlene Cook and Kelly Nelson, who have children attending the Happy Go Lucky Day Care Center, called the Daily Times this week to praise the quick action of 17-year-old Tamara Thompson, one of Happy Go Lucky’s star employees. Tamara noticed that an entire container of bleach had spilled near the janitor’s closet and was giving off fumes in one of the nearby classrooms. Knowing that some of the children have asthma, Tamara walked the children to another teacher’s classroom so they wouldn’t be exposed. She then rushed back with paper towels to clean up the spill. Unfortunately, Tamara herself suffered breathing problems after cleaning up the bleach and had to be taken to the emergency room to be checked. She is currently at home recovering but plans to return to work when she feels better.

What went right in this situation?
- Tamara made sure the children were not exposed to the spill.

What went wrong in this situation?
- Tamara shouldn’t have tried to clean up the spill herself, without being trained in how to do it properly and without the appropriate personal protective equipment.
What steps should be taken in this workplace to make sure employees are better protected and prepared the next time?

- Employees should be trained to leave chemical spills alone and to alert a supervisor so that someone with training and the appropriate personal protective equipment can handle it.
- Caution tape should be used to secure the area so others can’t go near the spill.
- Personal protective equipment appropriate for the types of chemicals on site should be available.
- In some situations, it is best to call the fire department to assist with spills.

Story D: Young Construction Worker Falls From Ladder

An 18-year-old house painter, who was painting the second story of a house, fell off his ladder yesterday, breaking both legs. He also suffered severe cuts when he caught his arm on a metal fence during the fall. Coworkers rushed to assist him and called for an ambulance. Local EMTs reported that the co-workers carried the fallen employee to the front lawn and then applied pressure to the open wound to stop the bleeding.

What went right in this situation?

- Co-workers called 911. The co-workers knew to apply pressure to the bleeding wound.

What went wrong in this situation?

- Employees should not have moved the injured worker because more damage may be caused.
- Only trained employees should administer first aid.
- It doesn’t appear that the employees wore gloves before touching the bleeding young worker.

What steps should be taken in this workplace to make sure employees are better protected and prepared the next time?

- Employees should be trained to call 911 or medical staff whenever there is an injury.
- Employees should be trained not to move a co-worker with possible broken bones because this can cause more damage.
- Workers should not leave an injured co-worker alone except to call for help.
- There should be a first-aid kit easily accessible and several people should be trained in basic first aid. (Examples of items that should be in a first-aid kit are bandages, antiseptic, aspirin/pain reliever, thermometer, latex gloves, sunscreen, tweezers, scissors, syrup of ipecac (to induce vomiting), sterile gauze pads, tape, and safety pins.)

Story E: 6.1 Earthquake Shakes Local High Rise Office Building

Office workers at R&D Business Solutions huddled under desks and doorways as a 6.1 earthquake shook their building. Once the tremors subsided, they followed lighted exit signs to the stairwell. They made it down ten flights of stairs and outside to the street. Gladys Royce, of Washington Township, whose son, Jason, is an employee of the company, complained that her son, who has Down Syndrome, was left alone to figure out what to do during and after the earthquake. The employees and supervisors had no idea Jason had remained on the 11th floor. The company pledges to take another look at its Emergency Action Plan and make sure the plan protects and prepares all their employees, including those who may need extra assistance.
What went right in this situation?
- There were lighted exit signs.
- Employees took the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Employees didn't panic, so people weren't trampled.
- The company has a written Emergency Action Plan and will be making changes after evaluating what didn't work well.

What went wrong in this situation?
- Jason was left alone rather than assisted to the staircase.
- It does not appear that Jason or the other employees received training or drills in how to respond in the event of an earthquake.
- It doesn't appear that there was a designated meeting place or a procedure for doing a head count to make sure all employees were accounted for.

What steps should be taken in this workplace to make sure employees are better protected and prepared the next time?
- Employees should be trained to get under heavy desks for earthquakes.
- Practice drills should be conducted so everyone knows the evacuation route and where to gather so a head count can be conducted.
- Someone should be responsible for bringing the daily sign-in sheet to make sure all employees have been accounted for.
- The company should consider instituting a buddy system, or some other method, to assure that employees who need extra assistance are able to leave the building safely.

Story F: Tornado Breaks Windows at Local Department Store
A tornado blew through town yesterday, causing major power outages and damage to several buildings, including blowing out most of the windows in Johnson's Department Store on East 8th Street. As glass went flying, employees reportedly herded customers into the center section of each floor in the three-story building. Customer Tom Wilson expressed appreciation for the assistance employees provided in getting everyone away from the windows.

What went right in this situation?
- Employees knew to get people away from the windows.
- Employees took responsibility for getting customers to safety.

What went wrong in this situation?
- The employees and customers should have gone to the lowest place in the building, preferably the basement.
What steps should be taken in this workplace to make sure employees are better protected and prepared the next time?

- Employees should be trained on elements of the emergency plan, such as going to the lowest level of the building during tornadoes or hurricanes and staying away from windows.
- Practice drills should be conducted so employees know the evacuation route and where to gather so a head count can be conducted.
- A supervisor should bring the workplace sign-in sheet to make sure all employees have been accounted for.

The following OSHA and State of Washington L&I-DOSH-WISHA codes correspond to information in this unit:

OSHA 29 CFR 1910.33 Means of Egress
OSHA 29 CFR 1910.155 Fire Protection
L&I DOSH WISHA WAC 296-800-300 Fire Extinguishers
Disaster Blaster
### Disaster Blaster Game Cards, page 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.</th>
<th>A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you are inside a building and begin to feel the shaking of an earthquake, what should you do?</td>
<td>Get under something heavy or sturdy like a desk or doorframe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you are in a building and hear a tornado warning, what should you do?</td>
<td>Go to the lowest level of the building; the basement, a storm shelter, or an interior room without windows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you smell smoke and suspect a fire burning somewhere in the building, what should you do?</td>
<td>Shut the door, get out of the building, and call the fire department from somewhere else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If someone comes into your workplace with a gun, what should you do?</td>
<td>Cooperate fully with the gunman’s instructions. Don’t try to be a hero.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If an unknown chemical spills in your workplace, what should you do?</td>
<td>Leave it alone and get your supervisor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many exit routes must a workplace have?</td>
<td>Enough to allow for safe evacuation of all employees (and customers) but at least two exits.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Disaster Blaster Game cards, page 2

| Q. True or False? If you are caught in a fire you should stay close to the ground. |
| A. True. |

| Q. What are the steps for using a fire extinguisher? |
| A. Pull the pin; aim the nozzle; squeeze the trigger; sweep the extinguisher back and forth over the fire. |

| Q. What phone number should you call to report an emergency? |
| A. 911. |

| Q. What should you do for a severe cut? |
| A. Apply pressure to the wound and, if there are no broken bones, elevate the wound above the heart. Seek medical help. |

| Q. What should you do for a very serious second or third degree heat burn? |
| A. Call 911. Don’t remove clothing if stuck to the burned area. |

| Q. What should be used to put out a grease fire on a stove? |
| A. A pan lid or baking soda. Never water or flour. |

| Q. You are driving home from work. It is late and you are on a quiet country road. Your car breaks down. What should you do? |
| A. Stay calm. Look for and follow lighted exit signs. |

| Q. You are working on a construction site and a co-worker enters a trench and passes out. What do you do? |
| A. Use your cell phone, if you have one, to call for help. Keep windows and doors locked and wait for police to arrive. |

| A. Tell a supervisor. Don’t go after him; you may become a second victim. |
### Disaster Blaster Game cards, page 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. A co-worker slips on a slippery floor and hits his head, losing consciousness. What do you do?</th>
<th>Q. If a co-worker falls off a ladder and injures his back, what should you do?</th>
<th>Q. If your clothes catch on fire, what should you do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Don’t move him because you may cause more damage. Call for help.</td>
<td>A. Do not move him yourself (this can cause more damage), and call 911 for an ambulance.</td>
<td>A. Stop, drop, and roll; or smother the flames with a blanket. Never run.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. What is at least one factor that increases your risk of being robbed at work?</th>
<th>Q. What letters are on the type of fire extinguisher that can be used in any kind of fire?</th>
<th>Q. What are the information sheets called that provide information about chemical products?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Working alone; working at night; access to money.</td>
<td>A. A–B–C.</td>
<td>A. Material Safety Data Sheets—MSDSs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. What is at least one item that should be included in an emergency kit?</th>
<th>Q. What does the skull and crossbones symbol mean?</th>
<th>Q. If a chemical gets into your eye, what should you do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Water; flashlight and batteries; first aid supplies.</td>
<td>A. Poison.</td>
<td>A. Flush it with water for at least 15 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>A.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What is one security measure that can reduce the chance of workplace violence?</strong></td>
<td>Good lighting; a panic button or other communication device; a security guard; a video camera.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Which is more hazardous, a sharp knife or a dull knife?</strong></td>
<td>A dull knife.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What two common household cleaning products should you never mix?</strong></td>
<td>Ammonia and bleach because chlorine gas is released.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If you hear a hurricane warning on the T.V. or radio it means that a hurricane is expected to reach land within how many hours?</strong></td>
<td>24 hours.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If you are driving to work and see the funnel shape of a tornado approaching, what should you do?</strong></td>
<td>Get out of the car and lie down in a low place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If you are working outside when a lightning storm starts and you can’t get to shelter, what should you do?</strong></td>
<td>Crouch low to the ground, sit on the balls of your feet, stay away from trees and metal objects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name at least two things that should be strapped down in your house or workplace to prepare for earthquakes.</strong></td>
<td>Heavy furniture; bookshelves; cupboards; refrigerator; water heater.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What can you use to melt ice on the sidewalks in the winter?</strong></td>
<td>(Rock) salt.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name at least two things that should be in an Emergency Action Plan.</strong></td>
<td>Who is in charge; escape routes; training; drills; alarm systems; meeting place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emergencies in the News

In your small group, read your assigned news story, then answer the three questions on the other side.

**Story A: Grease Fire in Restaurant Burns Employee**

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**Questions**

1. What went right in this situation?

2. What went wrong in this situation?

3. What steps should be taken in this workplace to make sure employees are better protected and prepared the next time?
Emergency Action Plans

Planning ahead can reduce the effects of an emergency on workers, the workplace property, and the surrounding community. In preparing an Emergency Action Plan, an employer can figure out what protections are needed and what procedures should be followed in an emergency. All workplaces should have an Emergency Action Plan.

An Emergency Action Plan should be in writing. It should state who is responsible for coordinating emergency response; where chemicals are stored and where Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) for these chemicals are kept; and how critical operations will be maintained during and after an emergency (if necessary). The plan should also list measures that will be taken to protect employees (including those with physical disabilities).

Training and drills
There should be training and regular practice drills so everyone knows what to do during different kinds of emergencies. Workers should be trained so they understand their responsibilities during an emergency; the alarm system and “all clear” announcements; where to gather during an emergency; how to report an emergency; what to do if there is a chemical spill; and when and how to use emergency equipment.

Alarm systems
These must be seen, heard, and understood by all employees.

Shelters and evacuation
The plan should designate inside shelters, exits, evacuation routes and procedures, and outside meeting places. Shelters inside the building should be identified if tornadoes or hurricanes are a possibility. Exits and evacuation routes should be checked periodically to be sure they are not blocked. Exits should be of sufficient number, width, and location that workers can rapidly evacuate. An outside meeting place should be designated so employees can be counted after evacuation.

Emergency lighting
Exit routes should have emergency lighting in all areas where work is performed after daylight hours.

Emergency equipment
The plan should provide for installation and testing of appropriate emergency equipment such as building sprinkler systems, fire extinguishers, eyewash systems, and safety showers if chemicals are used.

Procedures to follow when someone is injured
First aid kits should be provided, as well as trained personnel to use them. Employees should know who is trained in first aid or CPR, and where to get medical attention if needed.