

Spring into Safety

Spring cleaning should be more than tossing those old magazines out and organizing your desk. As the weather starts to get warmer, the birds return to the north and the days are longer. The shift to spring changes our outlook on daily schedules, our choices in activities, and even our attitude changes just a little. It is essential to know how these shifts could affect you, your family, and your daily life. Even with the warmth of Spring and the landscape's greening, it's more important than ever to be aware and conscious.

Why You Need a Plan

If you have more than ten (10) employees, [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) (OSHA) requires organizations to have an emergency action plan. It is best practice to review the plan once a year and after each exercise discuss if your team noticed any issues.

You may feel that writing the initial plan was a lot of work. However, the task of reviewing your plan is less daunting when you do it annually. Here are some great tips to make that job even easier.

Review the Requirements

OSHA's [1910.38 standard](#) requires **that the plan is in writing, kept in the workplace, and available to employees for review**. OSHA's standard says that an emergency action plan must include the following elements at a minimum:

- Procedures for reporting a fire or other emergency.
- Procedures for emergency evacuation, including the type of evacuation and exit route assignments.
- Procedures to be followed by employees who remain to operate critical plant operations before they evacuate.
- Procedures to be followed by employees performing rescue or medical duties.
- The name or job title of every employee who may be contacted by employees who need more information about the plan or explain their responsibilities under the plan.

Communication Plan:

- How do you communicate with your team and staff?
- How quickly do you activate your plan during an emergency?
- How do you send messages to your stakeholders?
- How do you reach out to people outside your organization?
- What are your procedures and authorities for communicating to your organization?
- Who is responsible for activating your continued communications process?
- Do you have any requirements for an annual review? Institutions of High Education and Health Care have a legal mandate to review and report. We recommend this for every industry.

Review Drills

Having a "command structure" in place is essential to the successful outcome of any crisis you may face. Using established incident command system principles is a great place to start. It would be best to have someone in charge of Command, Planning, Operations, and Logistics. Having a transparent chain of command and individual responsibilities will help everyone be prepared for any emergency.

Your organization should exercise and conduct drills regularly. Each year there are national exercise days such as the Great ShakeOut (Earthquake), National Tsunami Walk for coastal communities, Wildland Fire week, Tornado awareness week, flood awareness, and severe weather weeks.

Exercises and drills are for you and your team to practice emergency plan elements, such as emergency escape routes, going to off-site rally points, communications, and duck-cover-hold on, for example. Everyone has an active role during a drill and each person needs to know what actions to take to stay safe during an incident, no matter what.

Running each practice drill in total doesn't have to be a part of your spring cleaning, but it is an excellent opportunity to establish when drills will be run or perform a tabletop drill.

When you decide to run a drill, you may want to involve your police and fire departments in the planning and exercise as well. You may also want to post signs and staff in key locations, so visitors will know there isn't an actual emergency.

Questions to ask when reviewing your drill:

- **Access and Functional Needs:** Are there any needs in your organization that are currently unaccounted for? Do you have any members that have significant mobility issues or medical conditions to address?
- **Time:** Ensure that you set aside a proper amount of time. It is easier to end the exercise early and give people back time than to extend the training.
- **Goals and Objectives:** To measure if your exercise was a success, you need to establish the event's purposes. You can use the "SMART" goals system as a great tool for goal setting: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant and **T**imely (or **T**ime-based)

After Action Review

After each exercise or drill, bring your team together for a quick meeting. In your debrief, you can address any concerns and findings. Remember, you are drilling your plan, not the individuals participating. If you find any shortcomings, you can simply revise your plan.

Addressing these problems now ensures that you won't have them during an actual emergency.

Communications Check

Internal

Use Titan HST's document repository to make OSHA and company policies instantly accessible to your employees. Store important resources or protocols in the "Documents & Materials" section. Site administrators can also broadcast these materials in real time or on scheduled dates to ensure they are seen on a regular basis.

Access the "Documents & Materials" section from the Profile section of the Titan HST mobile app, or the "Documents" tab on the Titan HST web portal.

Using the Titan HST mass notification system during drills allows you to streamline the event by easily informing and guiding your organization's members, receiving information back from and simultaneously ensuring that they know how to use the platform in the event of real emergency.

The Titan HST system is simple enough for new users to learn quickly. Check that your team and staff are confident using Titan HST. Empower them through a refresher training. Titan even offers easy to follow training modules.

Access the Titan HST training portal on the web portal by selecting the "Training Modules tab.

Access the Titan HST training portal on the mobile app by:

- Tapping the Profile icon
- Selecting "Training Modules"

Take this time of the year to test the system. Make sure that your admin team can send a message and respond to messages coming in from your organization members.

Not everyone can be available for an in-person meeting during an emergency. When you are testing the Titan HST System, it is also a great time to test the 2-way video calling and the phone conference call features.

During your spring-to-preparedness review, check that your team can quickly summon critical stakeholders to facilitate discussion about the next steps. It is best to check for this ability ahead of time instead of realizing it in the middle of an incident.

External

We have all experienced alert fatigue. Instead of the typical "this is a test" message, when you are testing the system, we recommend that you include real safety tips to help you organization members start their spring-into-readiness!

Share tips such as:

- Check your smoke alarms. Replace the batteries in your smoke detectors.
- Clear that laundry lint. Built-up lint behind the dryer is a cause of house fires.
- Trim those tree limbs to provide a defensible space around your structures.

Update Your Site Floor Plan

Have any physical layout changes occurred at all since you last updated your emergency plan? Adding walls or doors to your offices is common. Have you updated your evacuation plans? Have you shared your new floor plan with emergency services?

Review your floor plans for areas that are new or may have been overlooked when the plan was first created. Add your updated floor plan and emergency exit routes to Titan HST's document repository and provide any information to first responders about your facilities that you want them to know ahead of an emergency. Contact your local fire and police officials for more information on how to collaborate with them.

Emergencies occurring on school campuses, healthcare, and other properties present first responders with unique challenges, impacting their ability to assist. Your facilities may be difficult to access. Make a note of any locks, gates, or codes. They can be confusing to navigate once accessed.

Spring Cleaning with Preparedness in Mind

As you review your organization's emergency response plan and the best solutions to fit your needs, keep the following factors in mind. They will play a significant role in the success or failure of your next emergency response.

Spring into readiness by reviewing your emergency plan benefits your whole organization. You don't need to start from scratch. Just make sure your plan is up to date. Preparing for upcoming emergencies requires looking backward at past incidents and exercises. Now is the time to determine what worked and what didn't. Please don't wait until your emergency plan has an issue to review it. Annually checking for any dust or cracks in your plan will help the rest of your year run smoothly.

If you'd like any assistance reviewing your current emergency plan, please reach out, and we'd be happy to help!

References:

<https://www.ready.gov/business/implementation/emergency>

https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/min_requirements.html

https://www.weather.gov/safety/events_calendar