

## Are We Prepared for Emergencies at Work?



With the number of natural disasters that have hit the nation and various regions of New York State and with October being fire prevention month, it is a good time to be thinking Emergency Preparedness. OSHA felt so strongly about emergency preparedness, that they deemed the month of September National Preparedness Month. The latest statistics from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) show that if you have a reported fire in your home, you are more likely to die today than you were a few decades ago. This is a startling statistic and is behind this year's Fire Prevention Week theme: "[Look. Listen. Learn. Be aware - fire can happen anywhere.™](#)" Fire Prevention Week takes place October 7-13, 2018.



Through three simple calls-to-action, this year's theme identifies basic but essential ways people can reduce their risk of fire and be prepared in the event of one:

- **Look** for places fire can start
- **Listen** for the sound of the smoke alarm
- **Learn** two ways out of each room

"People take safety for granted and are not aware of the risk of fire," said Lorraine Carli, NFPA vice president of Outreach and Advocacy. "Paying attention to your surroundings, looking for available exits in the event of a fire or other

emergency, and taking the smoke alarm seriously if it sounds can make a potentially life-saving difference in a fire or other emergency situation."

This year's Fire Prevention Week message applies to virtually all locations and circumstances, work or home. However, NFPA continues to focus on home fire safety, as the majority of U.S. fire deaths (four out of five) occur at home each year.

### OSHA's Plan Ahead, Know the Hazard, Keep Safe Emergency Preparedness Campaign -

Emergencies can create a variety of hazards for workers in the impacted area. Preparing before an emergency incident plays a vital role in ensuring that employers and workers have the necessary equipment, know where to go, and know how to keep themselves safe when an emergency occurs. A workplace emergency is a situation that threatens workers, customers, or the public; disrupts or shuts down operations; or causes physical or environmental damage. Emergencies may be natural or man-made, and may include hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, wildfires, winter weather, chemical spills or releases disease outbreaks, releases of biological agents, explosions involving nuclear or radiological sources, and many other hazards. Many types of emergencies can be anticipated in the planning process, which can help employers and workers plan for other unpredictable situations.

OSHA has Emergency Preparedness and Response web pages that provide information on how to prepare and train for emergencies and the hazards to be aware of when an emergency occurs. The pages provide information for employers and workers across industries, and for workers who will be responding to the emergency and can be found at:

[www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/index.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/index.html)



# Monthly Toolbox Talk

## Flood Preparedness

Floods can be serious catastrophes and they are one of the most common hazards in the United States. Floods can be caused by a variety of factors, including a sudden accumulation of rain, rising rivers, tidal surges, ice jams and dam failures. Workers who have to respond to flooded areas face the greatest risks from floods, but all workers can help protect themselves by preparing evacuation plans and learning about the hazards commonly associated with floods.

### Planning

Having an evacuation plan in place before a flood occurs can help avoid confusion and prevent injuries and property damage. A thorough evacuation plan should include:

#### General Planning

- Conditions that will activate the plan
- Chain of command
- Emergency functions and who will perform them
- Specific evacuation procedures, including routes and exits
- Procedures for accounting for personnel, customers and visitors
- Equipment for personnel
- Review the plan with workers

#### Preparation

- Know types of flood risk in your area. Visit FEMA's [Flood Map Service Center](#) for information.
- Sign up for your community's warning system. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio also provide emergency alerts.
- If flash flooding is a risk in your location, then monitor potential signs, such as heavy rain.
- Learn and practice evacuation routes, shelter plans, and flash flood response.
- Gather supplies in case you have to leave immediately, or if services are cut off. Obtain extra batteries and charging devices for phones and other critical equipment.
- Keep important documents in a waterproof container. Create password-protected digital copies.
- Protect your property. Move valuables to higher levels. De-clutter drains and gutters. Install check valves. Consider a sump pump with a battery.

#### Survival During a Flood

- Depending on where you are, the impact and the warning time of flooding, go to the safe location that you previously identified.
- If told to evacuate, do so immediately. Never drive around barricades. Local responders use them to safely direct traffic out of flooded areas.
- Listen to EAS, NOAA Weather Radio, or local alerting systems for current emergency information and instructions.
  - **Flood Warning System**
    - **Flood Watch:** Flooding is possible. Monitor radio and television stations for more information.



- **Flash Flood Watch:** Flash flooding is possible. Be prepared to move to higher ground; monitor radio and television stations for more information.
  - **Flood Warning:** Imminent threat - Flooding is occurring or will occur soon; if advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
  - **Flash Flood Warning:** Imminent threat - A flash flood is occurring or will occur soon; seek higher ground on foot immediately.
- Do not walk, swim, or drive through floodwaters. **Turn Around. Don't Drown!**
  - Stay off bridges over fast-moving water. Fast-moving water can wash bridges away without warning.
  - If your vehicle is trapped in rapidly moving water, then stay inside. If water is rising inside the vehicle, then seek refuge on the roof.
  - If trapped in a building, then go to its highest level. Do not climb into a closed attic. You may become trapped by rising floodwater. Go on the roof only if necessary. Once there, signal for help.

### *Be Safe After the Flood*

- Listen to authorities for information and instructions. Return to work or home only when authorities say it is safe.
- Avoid driving, except in emergencies.
- Snakes and other animals may be indoors. Wear heavy gloves and boots during clean up.
- Be aware of the risk of electrocution. Do not touch electrical equipment if it is wet or if you are standing in water. If it is safe to do so, turn off the electricity to prevent electric shock.
- Avoid wading in floodwater, which can contain dangerous debris and be contaminated. Underground or downed power lines can also electrically charge the water.
- Use a generator or other gasoline-powered machinery **ONLY** outdoors and away from windows.

