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Weekly Safety Tip

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May 1, 2017

SCI Safety Tip: Fire Drills: Why, When, and How

By: Chris Kilbourne

Source: <http://www.blr.com>

Date: September 21, 2010



Preparation is the key to effective response to workplace fires. Fire drills help prepare employees to respond quickly, calmly, and safely. Fire drills play a very important role in workplace fire safety. Although OSHA does not require fire drills, it strongly recommends them.

In its “Evacuation Plans and Procedures eTool,” OSHA says: “It is a good idea to hold practice drills as often as necessary to keep employees prepared. Include outside resources such as fire and police departments when possible. After each drill, gather management and employees to evaluate the effectiveness of the drill. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of your plan and work to improve it.” It’s important to note that even though OSHA doesn’t require drills, local fire codes and your insurance carrier may require you to hold periodic fire drills to ensure safe evacuation of employees.

Fire Drill Objectives

Fire drill objectives include:

- Giving employees an opportunity to practice emergency procedures in a simulated but safe environment
- Determining if employees understand and can carry out emergency duties

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- Evaluating effectiveness of evacuation procedures and determining necessary changes or adjustments to procedures to improve performance
- Complying with requirements of the local fire code

Fire Drill Frequency

How often you conduct fire drills depends in part on the requirements of your local fire code and in part on fire hazards in your workplace. In a workplace with serious fire hazards (for example, flammable materials or difficult egress as in high rise buildings), fire drills should be conducted at least once every 3 months. In other workplaces every 6 months may be adequate.

Fire Drills: Announced or Unannounced

Employees probably prefer announced drills, and it might be easier for supervisors to plan for the event and minimize workflow disruption. But unannounced drills more accurately measure evacuation readiness in most cases.

Whether fire drills are announced or unannounced really depends on the goal of a particular drill.

For example, if you are introducing employees to new evacuation procedures or routes, an announced drill is probably more appropriate, since this will give everyone a chance to practice in a more secure way. Employees will know this isn't "the real thing," and will therefore more likely be calm and focused on learning the new information. Similarly, if you want to drill one department or work area in specific emergency procedures, or if you want to see how a group of workers will respond to one of their evacuation routes being blocked, giving employees and group fire marshals a chance to discuss the simulation and develop team strategies might be a good idea.

On the other hand, there's nothing like surprising people to see how they will react. And since emergency situations are never planned, you want to see how you're people will react if they think it is "the real thing." So unannounced drills can also be very useful.

Fire Drill Evaluation

To make sure drill objectives have been met and employees have conducted themselves properly and effectively during the drill, the safety staff should observe the drill and evaluate it immediately following the event.

When evaluating fire drills, ask questions such as:

- Did your fire alarm activate properly?
- Did all employees hear the alarm?
- Did any voice communication system operate properly and were instructions audible?
- Did electro-magnetic locking devices release locked doors upon the fire alarm system signal?
- Did employees check work areas for fire?
- Did they close doors and windows (if applicable) before evacuating?
- Was equipment properly shutdown?
- Did all employees participate in the drill?
- Did employees carry out emergency duties properly?
- Did employees follow assigned evacuation routes?
- Were corridors and stairwells clear and unobstructed?
- Did any employees who need assistance evacuating get it?
- Did employees go directly to assembly areas after evacuating the building?
- Did someone check to make sure all employees were accounted for?



SCI OSHA: Two Contractors Cited as One Employer

Source: <http://www.blr.com>

By: Contributing Editor

Date: April 28, 2017

Why did OSHA take the unusual step of citing two contractors as a single employer? What should you know about this enforcement action? Learn more here.

An administrative law judge with the independent Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission ruled that two Massachusetts contractors were operating as a single employer at a Wenham worksite when three employees were injured in 2014.

The workers were performing residential roofing work on a ladder jack scaffold when the wooden plank they were standing on



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Quick Tips for Healthy Living

May is Arthritis Awareness Month

According to the Arthritis Foundation, 53 million adults in the United States suffer from some form of arthritis. While you may worry that exercising with osteoarthritis could harm your joints and cause more pain, research shows that people can and should exercise when they have osteoarthritis. In fact, exercise is considered the most effective non-drug treatment for reducing pain and improving movement in patients with osteoarthritis.

What Exercises Work Best for Osteoarthritis?

Each of the following types of exercises plays a role in maintaining and improving the ability to move and function:

Range of motion or flexibility exercises. Range of motion refers to the ability to move your joints through the full motion they were designed to achieve. These exercises include gentle stretching and movements that take joints through their full span. Doing these exercises regularly can help maintain and improve the flexibility in the joints.

Aerobic/endurance exercise. These exercises strengthen the heart and make the lungs more efficient. This conditioning also reduces fatigue and builds stamina. Aerobic exercise also helps control weight by increasing the amount of calories the body uses. Aerobic exercises include walking, jogging, bicycling, swimming or using the elliptical machine.

Strengthening exercises. These exercises help maintain and improve muscle strength. Strong muscles can support and protect joints that are affected by arthritis. Two types of exercise are particularly good for most people with osteoarthritis.

Walking. It is (usually) free, it is easy on the joints and it comes with a host of benefits. One major plus is that it improves circulation – and wards off heart disease, lowers blood pressure and, as an aerobic exercise, strengthens the heart. It also lowers the risk of fractures (by stopping or slowing down the loss of bone mass) and tones muscles that support joints.

Aquatic (water) exercises. These are particularly helpful for people just beginning to exercise as well as those who are overweight. Aquatic exercises do not involve swimming, rather they are performed while standing in about shoulder-height water. The water helps relieve the pressure of your body's weight on the affected joints (hips and knees in particular), while providing resistance for your muscles to get stronger. Regular aquatic exercise can help relieve pain and improve daily function in people with hip and knee OA.

For more information, visit www.arthritis.org



snapped and sent them 20 feet to the ground. OSHA found that the plank was not graded for scaffold use.

OSHA cited both contractors due to the integrated nature of their operations, and the fact that they shared common worksites, management, and supervision. The general contractor said it was not responsible for worker safety, claiming that the employees were employed by the home improvement contractor.

The review commission decision noted a number of factors, including the general contractor's ability to fire or discipline workers, its directions to the other contractor, and its signs on the worksite. When the general contractor applied for building permits, it said it had no subcontractors on the job. In 2015, OSHA found numerous violations and fined the businesses a total of \$294,500. Both entities had been cited and fined previously by OSHA. In addition to the plank hazard, the inspection identified scaffold platforms that exceeded the maximum allowable height, ladders that did not extend at least three feet above landings, and failure to train employees in scaffold erection and safety, among others.

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*May 2, 2017
5:00 pm-6pm
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