

# Safety Bugle



## Today's Topic: Fire Safety in the Workplace

If a fire or other emergency happened at your workplace, would you know what to do? Planning ahead and staying calm will help you to be safe during any emergency.

Each year in the U.S. 70-80,000 serious workplace fires occur. Most workplace fires can be avoided by adopting an emergency plan that includes workplace fire prevention, and employee training.

### Be Prepared

- Have a building evacuation plan, know the plan, and practice the plan (Fire Drills).
- Post building evacuation plans throughout your workplace.
- Learn the location of the two nearest exits from your work area.
- Count the doors, desks, work stations, etc. between your work space and the nearest exit. Due to smoke or a power failure, an escape in the dark may be necessary.
- Know the location of the nearest fire alarm; know how to use it and be familiar with its signal.

### Don't Panic

- Call 911 to report emergencies—don't assume anyone else called for help. When talking to emergency personnel, remain calm and give the dispatcher as much information as you know.
- Never use the elevator during a fire. You may become trapped if the power goes out.
- Feel a door handle with the back of your hand for heat, then, feel the door starting at the bottom and moving to the top. If the door is hot, do not open it as smoke and flames may enter the room. If the door is cool, open it slowly and be prepared to quickly close it if smoke or heat rushes in.
- Leave quickly, closing doors as you go to contain fire and smoke.
- If you encounter smoke or fire during your escape, use another exit. If caught in smoke get as low as possible to the floor and move towards the exit. Heat and smoke rise so cleaner air will be near the floor.
- Once outside, move away from the building and proceed to your designated meeting location.
- If coworkers are still inside, notify emergency personnel. Do not attempt to re-enter the building to rescue coworkers. Stay out of the building until EHS, Police or Fire officials say it is safe to re-enter.

### If You Are Unable To Evacuate

- If you cannot escape safely, remain calm and protect yourself by closing as many doors as possible between you and the fire.
- Seal all cracks where smoke can enter by using wet materials such as jackets, towels, etc.
- If there's a telephone in the room where you are trapped, call 911 and tell them exactly where you are.
- Wait at a window if possible and signal for help by waving an object that can be seen from the outside.
- If possible, open a window for air, but do not break it as you may need to close the window if smoke rushes in.
- Remain calm while waiting for emergency personnel to rescue you.

### Prevent a Workplace Fire

- Practice good workplace housekeeping. Do not allow clutter to accumulate around exits and stairways. Fire exits should always remain free and accessible.
- Empty trash bins regularly.
- Smoke only in designated areas, and extinguish smoking materials safely.
- Maintain machinery to prevent overheating and friction sparks.
- Never refuel equipment powered by gasoline, kerosene, or diesel fuel when the equipment is hot, or in the presence of an open flame such as a furnace or water heater.
- Report electrical hazards. Many fires start in faulty wiring and malfunctioning electrical equipment.

It is important to understand the fire hazards of the materials with which you work.

- Use and store chemicals safely. Read the label and the Material Safety Data Sheet to determine flammability and other fire hazards.
- Provide adequate ventilation when using and storing these substances.
- Use all precautions to prevent ignition in potentially explosive atmospheres such as those containing flammable liquid vapors or fine particles. Use non-sparking tools, and control static electricity as required.

Many workplace fires are set by arsonists; do your part to prevent these incidents. Lock up as instructed; report suspicious persons; and don't leave combustible rubbish where it can be set afire outside the building.

- Never block sprinklers, firefighting equipment or emergency exits.
- Post emergency telephone numbers as well as the company address by the telephone in your station for quick access if a fire were to start in your work area.
- Fireproof your work area. Get rid of stockpiles of combustible materials.
- Remember, all those old files that you haven't gotten around to getting rid of are combustible.
- Learn how to properly use a fire extinguisher.



Fire extinguishers are small quick fixes. If you are unable to put out the fire, leave and close the door behind you. Don't let the fire come between you and your exit. Keep your back to the exit and the fire in front of you.