

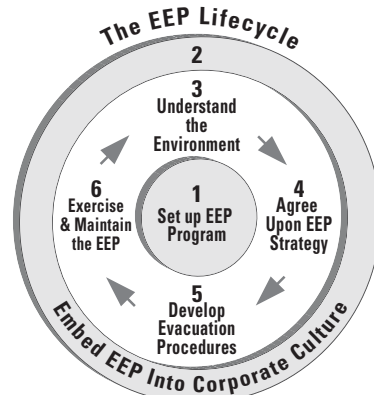


Introduction

The Essentials of Emergency Evacuation Planning

Emergency evacuations do not always have happy endings. Front-page headlines regularly feature mismanaged evacuations:

- Investigations continue into the 25 deaths and disorganized evacuation attempts that followed the January, 2012, accident involving the Italian cruise ship *Costa Concordia*. Negative publicity over the following months hurt the cruise ship company and the entire cruise industry.
- In the wake of the April, 2007, Virginia Tech tragedy in which a gunman killed 33 university students and faculty, public criticism was directed at university administration because of a lack of timely notification and a delay in evacuating students. Investigations, fines, and lawsuits continue. In March, 2012, a jury awarded families of two slain students \$4 million each in a wrongful death lawsuit against the university.



0.1 Are You Prepared?

Whether your role in the organization is:

- ▶ Director,
- ▶ Owner,
- ▶ Partner,
- ▶ Legal Counsel,
- ▶ Facilities Manager,
- ▶ Business Continuity Manager,
- ▶ Emergency Response Manager,
- ▶ Human Resources Manager, or
- ▶ Leader of a Workgroup or Department,

...you need to take a minute to answer these questions to evaluate the status of emergency evacuation planning (EEP) in your organization.

0.1.1 Does Your Company Have Effective Emergency Evacuation Plans and Procedures in Place?

Have you seen reports of regular emergency evacuation exercises or drills? Those reports would have included recommendations for the improvement, maintenance, or continuation of the plans and procedures.

Without a formal, signed, published policy document which quotes a benchmark or standard...you and your colleagues could be accused of corporate negligence.

Is the answer “Yes”? – If your organization has formal, published plans and procedures in place, take the time to review these in accordance with the lifecycle outline in this book to bring them in line with current best practices.

Is the answer “No”? – You have a problem! If those plans and procedures are not in place, an investigator (or auditor) should become familiar with the concepts outlined in this book before conducting an investigation or audit of whatever emergency procedures might be in place.

0.1.2 Does Your Organization Have a Formally Agreed Upon Policy Regarding Emergency Evacuation of Your Premises?

Without a formal, signed, published policy document which quotes a benchmark or standard designed to be used for reference purposes, you and your colleagues could be accused of corporate negligence.

If there is a policy document in place but it makes no reference to a benchmark or standard, then you should appoint someone to investigate the possibility of incorporating this EEP lifecycle model into your policy. The lifecycle model presented here is a useful representation of current best practices.

Is the answer “No?” – You have a problem! If such a document does not exist, then you need to develop a policy without delay. Appoint someone to apply the concepts of this EEP Toolkit lifecycle model and prepare a draft policy which you and your colleagues can either approve or amend. You can find a suitable template in the accompanying toolkit which can be adapted to suit the needs of your organization.

Is the answer “Yes, but?” – If there is a policy document in place BUT there is no reference to a benchmark or standard then you should appoint someone to investigate the possibility of incorporating our EEP life cycle model into your policy. Our life cycle model does represent the latest and best practice in this regard.

0.13 Could Your Company be Deemed Guilty of Negligence in Regard to Protecting the Health and Safety of Those Who Use, Visit, or Reside in Your Premises?

This question is especially important in regard to the disabled, who are particularly vulnerable and are normally the subject of specific laws and regulations. You should have adequate, i.e., tried and tested, emergency evacuation plans in place to protect the vulnerable. Look for hard evidence on file that verifies specifically that these plans have been tested and kept up to date.

Is the answer “No?” – If some of these measures are already in place, then your appointee should evaluate and improve them in accordance with the practices covered in this book.

Is the answer “Yes?” – You have a problem! If such a document does not exist, then you need to develop a policy without delay.

In evaluating your level of preparedness and what needs to be done next, the EEP lifecycle model summarized below – and covered in detail in the six sections of this book – should be taken as your guide to the latest and best practice in the subject.

Ten Signs of an Effective EEP Program: A Checklist

1. Single point of responsibility – Someone is responsible and accountable for the safe evacuation of everybody who may be on the premises.
2. Trained marshals in all areas – People can rely upon well trained helpers to guide them and assist them to leave the premises in safety.
3. Well marked exit and escape routes – All of the exit routes, exits and escape routes are clearly marked and indicated to suit the needs of the population.
4. Multiple safe assembly areas – A number of alternative safe assembly areas are easily accessible for everybody who may be on the premises.
5. Protected exit points – All exit points are protected by a stout canopy to protect evacuees from falling masonry and other debris as they leave the premises.
6. Visitor awareness program – All visitors to the premises are properly informed about evacuation procedures and planned drills or exercises.
7. Published regular exercise and testing program – A regular schedule of exercises, tests, and drills is in place, and everyone is kept informed about it.
8. Effective personnel accounting procedure – Tried and tested procedures are in place to ensure that everybody is properly accounted for in an emergency.
9. Ensures that all people on the premises are aware of an emergency situation and how they should respond.
10. Post-incident support in place – Support and assistance will be available to all those who may have been affected mentally, physically, or spiritually.