



Preface

As this book was being readied to go to press, I was shocked and angered to see a *New York Times* headline, “More Than 300 Killed in Pakistani Factory Fires.” Having spent the last decade or so of my career as an advocate for workplace safety, I was sickened and frustrated to read that the workers inside the textile factory “had few options of escape – every exit but one had been locked...and the windows were mostly barred.” Workers had flung themselves from top floors of the four-story factory. Most died from smoke inhalation.

This tragedy in Karachi, Pakistan, on September 12, 2012, now ranks as one of the worst industrial disasters in history – killing twice as many workers as the eerily similar Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of March 25, 1911, in New York City, in which 146 garment workers, mostly young, immigrant women, died from fire, smoke inhalation, or falling to their deaths. They had been unable to escape because managers had locked the doors to stairwells and exits to prevent pilferage. (And since I wrote these lines, a fire in a garment factory in Bangladesh in November, 2012, killed over 100 workers, also trapped without access to emergency exits.)

Reading about the recent fire and working through my anger and frustration, I reflected that, a century later, in spite of all the efforts that many of us have made at international standards for worker safety, 300 innocent people were permitted to die because their employers – who were responsible for their health and wellbeing while they were on the job – had not implemented basic emergency evacuation procedures. Almost exactly a century ago, there was an infamous tragedy of trapped workers in New York City’s garment district - and now, in 2012, it happens again in another garment district in Karachi, Pakistan – and I have to wonder why hard-working factory employees are no safer now than they were 100 years ago.

Origins of This Book

My basic ideas for this book began, not a century ago and not last week, but over a decade ago in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. I was already thinking seriously about emergency evacuation when a client, a major international news agency, asked my company for help. We had already been working with the agency on a business continuity program, but now they were concerned that their offices around the world could also become targets for terrorist activities. They asked for a specific methodology that would permit them to roll out an Emergency Evacuation Plan (EEP) for each of their 400 offices around the world.

Since we did not have such an EEP methodology on the shelf, we plunged into the development with some enthusiasm, and in six or seven weeks we were ready to make a firm proposal. But by then, the New York office of the agency had recovered from its fright and had moved on to look at “other more important things.”

At this point, I was intrigued, and began to incorporate the ideas I had developed in that project into my regular work as an independent Business Continuity (BC) consultant. I quickly found myself becoming an advocate for EEP as a logical extension of Business Continuity Management (BCM). These fundamental principles have remained unaltered, but experience and reflection have refined and expanded the subject considerably.

During the final stages of the preparation of this book, I began to see a clear and distinct methodology emerging, a formal, auditable process for EEP. I adapted the Business Continuity Institute (BCI) lifecycle, which represents best practices in BC, to create a unique EEP lifecycle. I explain this lifecycle in the introductory chapter which follows, and I use it as the basis of the structure of this book, dividing it into six sections, reflecting each of the six phases of the lifecycle.

Benefits of Planning Ahead

Whether the trigger is a fire, flood, explosion, earthquake, or some unforeseen event is irrelevant – at some point, you will need to get everybody safely out of the building and deal with the effects and consequences of the cause, whatever it might be.

Unfortunately, many management teams seem to consider planning for a worst-case scenario to be a waste of time, or they rank emergency preparedness very low on their list of priorities. If you take responsibility for this aspect of the operation, your challenge is to persuade the powers-that-be of the importance of these matters. As you encourage those in power to accept