



MSU-ES Dawg Tracks



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Safety Tips: Prepare for Office Emergencies

Emergencies in the office can occur in many different ways. We need to be alert to these and how to prepare for them. Obviously, none of us want to experience any type of emergency, but as we all know and have experienced in the last couple of years, emergencies do happen. In Mississippi they have come in the form of all weather related incidents.

Regardless of the location or size of the facility our workplaces need to be prepared for many kinds of disasters. Following are samples of disaster that can occur:

- Fire and explosions
- Structure collapse
- Release of hazardous chemicals from nearby transportation routes.
- Gas leaks
- Natural disasters such as tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods and blizzards
- Crashes of airline or other types of passenger carriers that can involve university employees or university properties
- Violent threats, incidents or actions by disgruntled employees or ex-employees.
- Bomb threats

It is virtually impossible to be prepared for every type of emergency situation, but if we have an emergency preparedness plan in effect, it will at least cover some situations. The plan should be designed to safeguard human lives, buildings, equipment, and materials in our offices.

Following are some basics for an emergency response crew. However, even if you aren't a member of a response crew these tips should be a part of your training and practices:

- ✓ Take emergency drills seriously as they could be the dress rehearsal for a real disaster.
- ✓ Get familiar with your surroundings so that you know exactly where the two exits are, in case of an emergency.
- ✓ Get familiar with the plans so that you know if you or whom might be responsible for helping with physical or semi-incapacitated employees.
- ✓ Get familiar enough with the plan so that you know the emergency procedures and how and who to report an emergency, how to direct them to the site, etc.
- ✓ Know who and how to contact employees with first aid experience.
- ✓ Know the location of the fire alarms and firefighting equipment, fire extinguishers, etc.
- ✓

What you should do in case of an emergency:

The extension handbook for guidelines for various disasters distributed to all extension offices in the last couple of years will give you hints for various types of disasters or incidents. If you do find yourself in the middle of an emergency, common sense and your instincts will guide you through parts of it and in addition to those, it is important to:

- ✓ If people are injured or if there is a threat of life, be sure to call 9-1-1 and/or 9-9-9.
- ✓ Keep yourself and others out of danger or "harm's way"
- ✓ Follow the advice of emergency services.
- ✓ Try to remain calm and think before acting- try to reassure others in this area.
- ✓ Check for injuries- but remember to check yourself before attempting to help others.

If you aren't involved in the incident, but are close by or you believe that you may be in danger, in most cases the advice to you is to:

- ✓ Get to a safe building
- ✓ Stay inside until you are advised otherwise
- ✓ If you have access to radio or TV, tune in to stay abreast of the latest information regarding the incident

If the incident involves a fire, obviously you can't go in, but in all other incidents – **GO IN- STAY IN- TUNE IN.**

Coping with Certain Emergencies-

Emergency services are trained to cope with a wide range of emergency situations, but there are some that you do to help them and yourself:

- Reduce the potential fire hazards in your facility
- Install fire alarms in the prominent places
- Most fire deaths and injuries occur when people are sleeping. So plan an escape route should a fire break out at night.
- If there is a fire, get out and call 9-1-1.
- If moving or trapped in smoke stay close to the floor where the air is cleaner.
- If a door feels hot, do not open it, as it probably means there is a fire on the other side.
- Remember if you have a fire in the office or the building- don't re-enter the area until the fire and rescue service has cleared it or made it safe.

Safety Tips – Bomb Precautions-

- If there is a bomb warning, follow the advice of those in charge.
- If a bomb does go off, find the safest way out of the building.
- If you are trapped stay close to a wall and tap on pipes until the rescue folks hear you.
- Do not use matches or a lighter for fear of a gas leak.
- If a bomb goes off outside your building, stay inside away from windows, doors, in case there is a second one.
- If you witness the explosion, stay in the area and report your findings to the police.

Chemical, Biological or Radiological Incidents-

- Move away from the immediate source of danger
- Wait for the emergency services to arrive and check you and determine if they need to decontaminate you.
- If you leave the office untreated you could contaminate the others and make an incident worse.

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Excerpts: www.safetysmart.com/safetysmart/resources

DON'T LEARN SAFETY BY ACCIDENT!

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