

Fire Alarms and Employee Responses

Handout

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to have and maintain an employee alarm system with a distinctive signal in case of emergency.

- You must be able to hear or see the alarm above the noise or light in the work area.

You should know at least two exit routes from any part of the building—wherever you might be.

- Go to your assigned meeting place promptly so your emergency leader will know that you are not in danger.

The company's fire prevention program takes into account the particular hazards that are present.

- Flammable or other hazardous substances used in your operations present increased danger of fire.
- Proper storage of such substances helps to reduce the hazards they present.
- Good housekeeping and keeping exit routes unblocked are necessary elements of fire prevention.
- Likewise, fire extinguishers must be inspected regularly, and there should be nothing to prevent easy access to them at all times.

Companies have different policies about whether employees should use fire extinguishers in case of small fires.

- If your company allows it, be sure you have been trained in how to operate the extinguishers properly.
- If there is doubt about the size of the fire or how fast it is spreading, call the fire department immediately, and alert other workers to evacuate.

If the fire alarm goes off, take it seriously—don't assume it is just a drill.

- Do not stop to get your coat or other personal belongings—just follow evacuation instructions immediately.
- If you are assigned to turn off equipment or perform other duties, do them quickly—however, your personal safety is most important.
- Use your best judgment about whether you can perform such duties safely.

Be aware of workers who may need assistance in recognizing the alarm or in evacuating promptly.

- Such workers usually have someone assigned to help them, but that person may be absent for some reason.
- In some emergencies, coworkers may have been injured and need help unexpectedly.

A company's fire prevention and emergency plan depends on cooperation from everyone. The plan may look great on paper, but it is worthless unless everybody understands his or her role and follows it.

Fire safety depends on YOU!