



EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES

When workers with disabilities are included in the workplace, there are some special considerations for emergency procedures that need to be addressed. This Guide provides tips for factories to ensure that all workers enjoy the same level of protection.

PROSPECTIVE USERS:

Any factory that:

- Has workers with disabilities in the factory and wants to ensure their safety.
- Is considering hiring workers with disabilities and needs more information about safety issues and emergency procedures.

A team of people should be appointed by management to be responsible for implementing this policy.

PROBLEM ADDRESSED

Many factory emergency procedures do not consider the special needs and requirements of workers with physical and/or sensory disabilities. This can be very dangerous for both disabled and non-disabled workers in the event of an emergency.

PROCESS

In order to ensure that the needs of all workers are considered in the factory emergency procedures, it is necessary to do a review of the factory emergency procedures considering the needs of workers with a disability. This Guide provides some basic information about the kinds of considerations that are important for different kinds of people with disabilities, and there are references for more details at the end of this Guide.

Steps in implementation

The basic steps in a chronological sequence are:

1. Set up a team of people to be responsible for updating the factory emergency policies and procedures to take into account the needs of workers with disabilities.
2. The team should collect additional information about health and safety for people with disabilities, as identified at the conclusion of this Guide.
3. The team should collect information about the number of workers with disabilities and the type of disabilities they have.
4. Using the information in the table below, and other information collected, review the existing emergency procedures to see if they are appropriate for all workers with disabilities.
5. Make necessary changes to the procedures and policies.
6. Get approval from management for the changes.
7. Implement amended policies.

Considerations for Emergency Procedures

The following issues should be considered when reviewing the emergency procedures:

Emergency exits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emergency exits must be clear from obstruction at all times and clearly marked as an emergency exit. ▪ Emergency exits must be wide enough for a wheelchair to use. ▪ Doors on emergency exits should not be too heavy, and should be able to be kept open. ▪ If you have disabled workers on higher floors you will need to develop a procedure for someone to help them downstairs in event of an emergency if elevators cannot be used. Make sure the workers with disability understand this procedure and know who is supposed to help them. ▪ Identify a 'buddy' for disabled workers who will help them to exit if there is an emergency. Provide training for the 'buddies' in communication and mobility for people with disabilities. Ensure all workers with disabilities know who their 'buddy' is.
Alarms and warnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All alarms should be visual as well as audible – all fire and emergency alarms should have a flashing light as well as an alarm sound.
Emergency personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All staff involved in helping during an emergency should be aware of where workers with disabilities are, and ensure that they have exited the building. ▪ Train emergency personnel in communication and mobility for people with disabilities so they understand how to help the disabled workers in the event of an emergency.
Emergency procedures training and drills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Train all emergency personnel in disability awareness so they consider the needs of the workers with disabilities. ▪ Train all emergency personnel in the procedures for assisting workers with disabilities in an emergency situation (e.g. procedures for helping disabled workers if elevators are unavailable, procedures for guiding vision impaired workers in an emergency etc.). ▪ Ensure all workers with disabilities fully understand the emergency procedures, particularly the specific procedures that apply to them. ▪ Practice the emergency procedures by holding regular (at least twice a year) emergency drills).

RESOURCES REQUIRED

No financial resources or prior training are necessary for the review. Additional resources may be required for installing new emergency alarms.

Time will have to be committed for training of emergency personnel in the new procedures, and for regular review and updating of procedures.

POSITIVE IMPACT

Ensuring good emergency procedures that take into consideration the needs of all workers makes the workplace a safer place for everyone.

CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS

It is important to update emergency procedures regularly. If new workers arrive, or workers leave, the procedures will have to be updated to ensure their needs are taken into account.

Make sure that new 'buddies' are identified if a buddy leaves the workplace.

INDICATORS FOR MONITORING

- Existence of emergency procedures that include procedures for disabled workers.
- Regular, successful emergency drills.
- All workers understand the emergency procedures.

Further Information Available:

See FIP Sub-Module: Disability in the Workplace

The US Job Accommodation Network has fact sheets and detailed information about making modifications to the workplace for different kinds of impairments. See www.jan.wvu.edu (English only)

See: ILO Ability Asia Website. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/ability/index.htm>

Vietnam Ministry of Construction has a Code and Standards for Accessible Construction. Contact **xxxxx** to get copies.

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