

Tips for Revising Emergency Preparedness Plans

Are your emergency management and communication plans in good shape? The best plans are reviewed, tested, and practiced on a regular basis. Check out these tips for improving your emergency preparedness.

KNOW WHERE YOU STAND TODAY

- Review your current emergency management and communication plans.
- Look for gaps in your current practices.
- Make sure your emergency plan answers these essential questions, and revise the plan if any aren't accounted for:
 - What are your objectives?
 - What types of people visit each building? Everyone should be accounted for in your plans.
 - What threats are you vulnerable to? Include local weather patterns, as well as threats that can affect any area with little or no warning, such as chemical spills, disease outbreaks, or active shooter incidents.
 - How is your site or campus structured?
 - What are the capabilities of your mass notification system?
 - Which agencies will respond to an emergency at your site or on your campus?

TEST YOUR PLAN

You can't be sure your emergency plans will work unless they've been practiced and tested. Stage these types of exercises on a regular basis so your key players are familiar with what to do.

- Tabletop exercises** should be conducted at least once a year. Bring key stakeholders together for a verbal walk-through or discussion of how you'll respond to a particular type of emergency.
- Functional or command post exercises** are more hands-on than tabletop exercises. They also extend outside the conference room. They're usually limited to practicing a single response, activity, or demonstrating a specific function—for example, setting up a command center.

- Full-scale or full-field exercises** are simulated events that test how you'll respond in a realistic scenario. They may involve local first responders and may even feature "victims" played by local residents or students.

FIX ISSUES AND PREPARE FOR THE NEXT TEST

- Do a risk assessment at least once a year. If you add a new building or do a major renovation, you'll need an extra assessment that covers the new or changing buildings.
- Propose mitigation projects to update your buildings, depending on what you find with your threat assessment and testing. For example, you may find an older building has doors that lock from the outside, which would be a problem if there's an active shooter in the building. Replacing those locks could save lives someday.
- Update your emergency plans any time someone's phone number changes or a person leaves the organization.
- Plan to continue testing your plans as they're updated. Tabletop exercises are cheapest to stage and should be done at least once a year. More hands-on scenarios should be done every few years.
- Invite emergency personnel to your facility once a year. Feed them, brief them, and give them a tour of your facility. This way, they'll be more familiar with your building if they ever have to respond there during a real emergency. 🍷