

Establishing a Fire Safety Program

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As we move through the month of October, we should all be aware that this is fire prevention month. This should be the time of year when we all review our emergency response plans, evacuation procedures, and fire prevention plans. All these together make up an all-encompassing Fire Safety Program.

A fire safety program should be concerned with both fire prevention and fire protection. Unfortunately, many operations place their entire emphasis on fire protection equipment and neglect what should be the most effective means of fire protection—fire prevention.

A basic fire prevention program should include policies and procedures that address fire safety concerns, regularly scheduled fire inspections, and a preventative maintenance program for high fire-risk equipment. A comprehensive inspection program should include fire-related items to help identify and correct hazardous situations before a fire loss occurs.

Fire protection equipment and emergency procedures should be selected and designed to minimize loss of life and property damage once a fire occurs. This equipment should be included in self-inspection and preventative maintenance programs to ensure proper operation in the event of a fire emergency.

Fire procedures and evacuation plans should be reviewed periodically and revised to meet the needs of any building or operational change.

Fire hazards are conditions that may create or increase the probability of a fire. To eliminate fire hazards, all personnel should:

- Keep passageways and exits clear.
- Maintain access to firefighting equipment such as extinguishers, hoses, cabinets, and fire protection systems.
- Enforce “No Smoking” regulations.
- Maintain stoves and ovens clean and free of grease residue.
- Ensure clothes dryer vents are cleaned/inspected on a regular interval.
- Properly store flammable and combustible materials.
- Report any apparent unsafe conditions that might result in fire.
- Take care to disconnect irons after use.
- Use interior finishes that meet life safety codes.

Employees should be introduced to fire procedures and fire-fighting equipment during their initial orientation. Department heads should instruct employees as to the location and

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application of fire alarms and fire extinguishers, as well as to fire procedures specific to their areas. Fire drills should also be scheduled regularly as appropriate.

Keep in mind that we are also moving into the holiday season, so decorations should also be reviewed for the purposes of fire prevention. Pay attention to holiday lighting in regard to electrical safety, and make sure other decorations do not block aisles or exit doors.

October is a great time to raise awareness around fire prevention and an opportunity to make it part of our workplace safety efforts all year long.

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