

# Emergency Action Planning

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## What is Emergency Action Planning?

An emergency is a sudden unforeseen crisis, usually involving danger, that requires immediate action. Emergency action planning is the process of identifying those emergencies that are likely to happen in your imaging lab, establishing procedures that protect both the employees and the business during the emergencies, and training the staff to carry out the procedures.

Emergency action planning is like insurance — you hope that you'll never have to use it but if you do, it's there to help. And like insurance, emergency planning must be done ahead of time because once the emergency occurs, it's too late.

All imaging lab owners/employers are required by OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) to create an emergency action plan for their workplace. Even those who are exempt from a written plan — those with 10 or fewer employees — must still have a plan. Regardless of size, we recommend that you commit the plan to writing.

## What's in an Emergency Action Plan?

An emergency action plan does exactly as its name indicates — describes the actions to take in an emergency. By establishing these actions ahead of time, if an emergency occurs, your employees can act quickly and according to plan, minimizing personal injuries and damage to your business.

PMA has developed a process called *10 Steps to Emergency Action Planning*. If you follow each of these steps, you'll have an effective emergency action plan for your imaging lab.

**Step 1** Identify the types of emergencies you can reasonably expect to have in your imaging lab:

- Is there a reasonable risk of fire? The photographic chemicals aren't flammable but there's a lot of packaging that could burn if a fire started. Does your shop have solvent inkjet inks or matte sprays that may be flammable or combustible?
- Is there a reasonable risk of spilling either toxic chemicals or a large volume of any chemicals? Does your imaging lab store quantities of acetic acid, sodium hydroxide or other chemicals that might be considered toxic? Are there large replenisher holding tanks that might burst or leak, causing a large volume spill? (A small bottle of photographic chemical concentrate would probably not be an emergency.)
- Is there a reasonable risk of a natural disaster type of emergency such as an earthquake, hurricane, tornado or flooding? What are the risks for the area of the country where your imaging lab is located?
- Don't forget about the risk of a staff member becoming sick or injured. Do you have trained first-aiders on site or do you rely on a local clinic or hospital?



# Emergency Action Planning

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Based on other processes and materials used in your imaging lab, identify the likely emergencies. Any emergencies that could reasonably occur should be part of your emergency action plan.

**Step 2** Designate at least one emergency coordinator for every work shift. The emergency coordinator should be someone who is well-acquainted with the imaging lab operations and the emergency plans. This is the person who oversees all aspects of the emergency action plan and assumes responsibility. If the imaging lab operates more than one shift, train at least two people per shift to be emergency coordinators — one the primary coordinator and the other as the alternate.

In a larger imaging lab having many employees, you may also need to appoint team leaders. These are people who are responsible for evacuating and accounting for up to about 20 employees, typically. The team leaders would report to the emergency coordinator to confirm headcounts.

**Step 3** Implement alarm systems, both internal and external. The **internal alarm** is the means of letting the employees know there's an emergency and it's time to put the emergency action plan into place. In a small imaging lab, the internal alarm is voice — someone telling the staff there's an emergency. In a larger lab, the internal alarm may be a bell, buzzer or announcement.

The **external alarm** is the alarm that alerts local emergency response providers — fire department, police, medical facility — that you have an emergency. This might be the familiar red pull-box type alarm that sounds within the building and is tied into the local fire hall or it could simply be the telephone.

**Step 4** Select and obtain emergency response equipment and supplies, based on those emergencies you've anticipated. In step 1 you identified the types of emergencies that you could reasonably expect to occur in your imaging lab. Obtain whatever equipment and supplies are needed for each type of emergency:

- Fires may require portable fire extinguishers.
- Spills may require spill control and clean-up materials.
- Earthquakes may require blankets, food and battery-operated lights.
- Injuries to personnel may require first-aid supplies.

**Step 5** Make arrangements with local emergency response service providers, to assist your business in an emergency. Identify any emergency response service providers that you might call on, based on the emergencies that you anticipate. These providers typically include the fire department, police, and local medical facilities. Once you complete your written emergency action plan, give a copy to each emergency response service provider and review it with them.

**Step 6** Draw a floor plan of your imaging lab showing the exits. If there is more than one story or the floor plan is complicated, also show the evacuation routes leading to the exits. Imaging labs should have at least two exits and exit routes. The exits should be apart from one another so that an employee isn't required to travel near the emergency in order to escape. When you've completed the floor plan, attach a copy to the written



# Emergency Action Planning

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emergency action plan. Also, post copies of the floor plan throughout the imaging lab for employees to see.

**Step 7** Develop step-by-step emergency procedures for each type of emergency and each employee function during an emergency. For example, identify the procedure and the person who is responsible for informing the staff of an emergency, calling the outside emergency responder (e.g., fire department, ambulance), taking the binder of material safety data sheets (MSDSs), and ensuring the facility has been evacuated. The emergency procedures will form the largest part of your emergency action plan.

**Step 8** Post emergency phone numbers next to the telephone. At a minimum, emergency telephone numbers should include the following:

- Emergency coordinator's home phone numbers
- Fire department
- Police department
- Ambulance
- Hospital/medical clinic
- Owner of the imaging lab

Check the phone numbers at least every six months to ensure they are current.

**Step 9** Put all of these elements into a written plan. All workplaces having more than 10 employees must have a written plan. Even for smaller employers, we recommend it. A written plan is much more likely to address all the necessary elements and be properly executed than a plan that people simply keep in their heads.

**Step 10** Train employees on all aspects of the emergency action plan. The success of the emergency action plan hinges on whether employees properly carry out the procedures assigned to them — whether that's evacuating or staying behind to respond to the emergency. This success can only happen through effective training.

Training should include reviewing the plan, showing employees where copies of the plan are posted, identifying each person's specific role during an emergency, and periodic drills. Based on the drills, revise the emergency action plan and retrain, as needed.

Employees must be given emergency action plan training at the following times:

- When the plan is developed
- When the plan changes
- When the employee's duties under the plan change
- When an employee is newly hired or assumes a new assignment

## What's the Next Step?

Once your emergency action plan is complete, use the compliance checklist on page 5 to find out whether you meet all of OSHA's requirements.



# Emergency Action Planning

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## Where Can I Find More Information?

Use the following PMA and OSHA resources to help you create your emergency action plan. Click on any of the links below.

### **OSHA Standard**

[Emergency Action Plan Standard](#)

### **OSHA etool**

[Do I Need an Emergency Action Plan](#)

[Evacuation Plans and Procedures eTool](#)

### **Publications**

How to Plan for Workplace Emergencies [\(html\)](#) [\(pdf\)](#)

Principal Emergency Response and Preparedness [\(pdf\)](#)

Sample Emergency Action Plan [\(pdf\)](#)

Small Business Handbook [\(html\)](#) [\(pdf\)](#)

Training Requirements for OSHA Standards [\(html\)](#) [\(pdf\)](#)

### **PMA Resources**

Health, Safety and Environmental Answerline [\(800\) 267-7550 \(toll-free\)](tel:(800)267-7550)

PMA Environmental Activities [environmental@pmai.org](mailto:environmental@pmai.org)

PMA Regulatory website [PMAregs.org](http://PMAregs.org)



# Emergency Action Planning

## Emergency Action Planning Checklist

Print a copy of this checklist and complete it at least once each year to verify compliance with OSHA's emergency action planning standard.

Requirement or Activity	Yes	No	Don't Know
1. We have identified the types of emergencies we can reasonably expect to have in our imaging lab.			
2. We have designated at least one emergency coordinator for every work shift.			
3. We have at least one internal alarm system to alert employees to an emergency.			
4. We have an external alarm system to alert outside emergency response service providers (e.g., fire department, hospital).			
5. We have obtained emergency response equipment and supplies, appropriate to the types of emergencies we have identified.			
6. We have made arrangements with local emergency response service providers, to assist us in an emergency.			
7. We have created a floor plan of our facility, showing every floor and exit.			
8. We have developed step-by-step emergency procedures for each type of emergency and each employee function during an emergency.			
9. We have posted the telephone numbers of emergency response providers next to each telephone.			
10. We verify the telephone numbers at least once every six months.			
11. Our emergency action plan is written. (Written response plans are required for workplaces having more than 10 employees, and recommended for all workplaces.)			
12. We have trained our employees on all aspects of the emergency action plan.			
13. We hold emergency action plan drills at least once each year. Following each drill, we evaluate the plan and make revisions as needed.			



\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person who completed the checklist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date