

Introduction to emergency planning and operations

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It is important for small businesses to develop Emergency Response Plans considering the social and economic impacts that disasters and setbacks can have on people's livelihoods. Some of the most common emergencies that require a response plan for businesses include fires, bomb threats and medical emergencies.

Fire Emergency Response Plan

Fires are among the most frequent disasters in the US, ranking besides weather related and health related events (Poyzner, 2011). A fire Emergency Response Plan must avoid duplication of roles among the involved people and lack of clarity in the steps to be taken since this may cause confusion, inefficiency and even risk to lives. The plan should clearly define the personnel, facilities, procedures and communication channels and procedures to be undertaken, while at the same time being tiered to the National Response Framework (National Response Framework, 2009).

The Concept of Operations to be followed in case of a fire emergency is as follows; the first step is to evacuate everyone from the building and from the vicinity, gather them at fire assembly points and account for everyone, meanwhile, the fire brigade should be called; if it is safe (small fires), put out the fire using fire extinguishers and fire blankets. If the fire gets out of hand close the door and keep everyone away from it. When the fire brigade arrives it is important that they are informed of your involvement (Emergency Management Plan, 2008).

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Bomb Threat Emergency Response Plan

The threat of terrorism is very much with us today, with statistics indicating that the bigger proportion of the population feel that the country is unsafe especially after the September 11 terrorist attacks (Bergen, 2011). It is thus imperative that even small businesses develop an Emergency Response Plan to counter bomb threat eventualities. Such a plan should not contain actions that will antagonize the caller, and at the same time actions that will create panic among the public since it will only make the operations difficult. The National Response Framework (2008) requires that the support and incidents annexes be followed in such a case.

In case one receives a call warning of a bomb placed in premises, the action plan should be as follows; keep the caller on the line as long as possible, attempting to write as much information as possible and ensure you inform the security department; ask questions such as the time set for explosion, appearance of the bomb, location, type of bomb and name of caller; avoid divulging the news to the public to prevent panic; in case of evacuation follow the right procedures; notify security about any suspicious packages (Bomb Threat, 2011).

Medical Emergency Response Plan

According to Poyzner (2011) medical related emergencies are at the top spot of all emergencies reported hence this is a critical issue for any organization. Some of the problems that may find their way into a medical emergency response plan include performing medical procedures by untrained individuals and raising alarm and panic. The response doctrine developed by the National Response Framework (2008) indicates that emergency

measures should take into consideration tiered action, unified, efforts and engaged partnerships.

The correct course of action for a non-first aider is to stay away from the casualty and instead immediately seek for first aid help. In case of a life-threatening situation one should call for emergency services with an ambulance. Correct reporting of the situation once medical help arrives is important to ensure effective response (Emergency Management Plan, 2008).

Conclusion

Small businesses can undertake Emergency Response Plans that will make their premises much safer to operate in and visit. In all the emergency cases that might arise including fires, bomb threats or health related issues, the response plans should beware of integrating certain mistakes in their procedures. They should at all times also cooperate with the doctrines of the National Response Framework.

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