

# Safety Matters

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National Fire Prevention Week is October 5-11, 2008

## Workplace Fire Safety

Fire safety is important business. National Fire Prevention Week is intended to focus on the importance of fire safety in the home, in schools and at work. But workplace fire safety is the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) principal focus, and saving lives and preventing injuries due to fire is a key concern.

There is a long and tragic history of workplace fires in this country. Problems with fire exits and extinguishing systems can cause many avoidable deaths, such as the 150 deaths in the **Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911**, and recently the 25 deaths at a **Hamlet, North Carolina poultry processing plant**.

When OSHA conducts workplace inspections, it checks to see whether employers are complying with OSHA standards for fire safety. OSHA standards require employers to provide proper exits, fire fighting equipment, emergency plans, and employee training to prevent fire deaths and injuries in the workplace.



### Building Fire Exits

- Each building must have at least two means of escape.
- Fire doors must not be blocked or locked to prevent emergency use.
- Delayed opening of fire doors is permitted when an approved alarm system is integrated into the door.
- Exit routes must be clear and free of obstructions and properly marked with signs.



### Portable Fire Extinguishers

- Each building must have the proper type of fire extinguisher for the hazards present.
- Employees must be instructed on the hazards of fighting fire, how to properly operate the extinguishers, and what procedures to follow to alert others.
- Only approved fire extinguishers are permitted to be used in workplaces, and proper maintenance and inspection of this equipment is mandatory.
- There must be written emergency plans and employee training for proper evacuation.



### Emergency Evacuation Planning

- Employers need a written fire emergency plan which describes the routes to use for evacuation. Accounting for all evacuated employees must be part of the plan.
- The written plan must be available for employee review.
- Special procedures must be implemented to help physically impaired employees evacuate, and for those employees who must remain behind temporarily to shut down critical plant equipment before they evacuate.
- An employee alarm system must be available throughout the workplace and must be used for emergency alerting for evacuation. Employees must know the evacuation signal.
- All employees will be trained on what to do in an emergency. Employers must review the plan with new employees and with all employees if the plan is changed.



### Fire Prevention Plan

- Employers must implement a fire *prevention* plan to complement the fire *evacuation* plan.
- The plan must include procedures for storage and cleanup of flammable materials and flammable waste.
- Procedures for controlling ignition sources such as smoking, welding and burning must be addressed in the plan.
- All employees are to be apprised of the potential fire hazards of their job and of the procedures in the fire prevention plan, and employers must review the plan with new employees and with all employees if the plan is changed.



### Fire Suppression System

- Properly designed and installed fixed fire suppression systems enhance fire safety in the workplace. Automatic sprinkler systems throughout the workplace are among the most reliable fire fighting means.
- Automatic fire suppression systems require proper maintenance to keep them in working order.
- As a temporary solution if the fire suppression system is out of order, the employer will substitute a fire watch of trained employees standing by to respond quickly to any fire emergency in the normally protected area. The fire watch must interface with the employers' fire prevention plan and emergency action plan.
- Signs must be posted about areas protected by total flooding fire suppression systems which use agents that are a serious health hazard such as carbon dioxide, Halon 1211, etc.

## 2007 Fire Loss Clock



Every 20 seconds a fire department responded to a fire.



One outside fire was reported every 41 seconds.



A structure fire was reported every 59 seconds.



A home structure fire was reported every 79 seconds.



A vehicle fire was reported every 122 seconds.



A civilian fire injury was reported every 30 minutes.



A civilian fire death occurred every 2.5 hours.



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# Remember... Safety Matters.

Comments and suggestions are always welcome and encouraged.



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