Fire drill toolbox talk: emergency evacuation

29 CFR 1910.38, 1910.37, 1910.36, 1926.35

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

If the alarm sounded right now, which way would you go, and where would you meet up outside?

Why it matters

In a fire or other emergency, there is no time to think about what to do. People who already know the alarm, the exit routes and the meeting spot move faster and make fewer mistakes. A drill is practice, and practice makes the real thing safer for everyone.

Key points

1. **Know the alarm and what it means**
   The employer must have and maintain an employee alarm system with a distinctive signal for each purpose (29 CFR 1910.38(d)). Know what a fire alarm sounds like on your site and how it differs from other signals. If you see or smell a fire before the alarm, report it right away using the way your plan says.
   29 CFR 1910.38(d)

2. **Know your exit routes and keep them clear**
   At least two exit routes must be available in a workplace to permit prompt evacuation, with exceptions where a single route is safe (29 CFR 1910.36(b)(1)). Exit routes must be free and unobstructed, and no materials or equipment may be placed in them, even for a short time (29 CFR 1910.37(a)(3)). Know both routes from your work area, including the one that is farther from the usual door.
   29 CFR 1910.37(a)(3)

3. **Leave right away and calmly**
   Stop what you are doing, make the work safe if it only takes a moment and walk to the nearest safe exit. Do not stop for personal items, do not use elevators and do not go back inside. Employees who must stay to operate critical plant operations follow the shutdown procedures in your plan before they leave (29 CFR 1910.38(c)(3)).
   29 CFR 1910.38(c)(3)

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4 Help others who need it

The employer must designate and train employees to assist in a safe and orderly evacuation of other employees (29 CFR 1910.38(e)). If you are one of them, know your job. Think about visitors, new workers and anyone who might need extra help, and make sure someone is assigned to them.

29 CFR 1910.38(e)

5 Go to the meeting point and be counted

An emergency action plan must include procedures to account for all employees after evacuation (29 CFR 1910.38(c)(4)). Go straight to your assigned meeting spot, stay there and check in with your supervisor. Do not leave and do not go back in until you are told it is safe.

29 CFR 1910.38(c)(4)

6 Know what OSHA does and does not say about drills

OSHA's emergency action plan rule does not set how often to hold a fire drill. It does require the employer to review the plan with each employee when the plan is developed or the employee is first assigned, when the employee's duties under the plan change and when the plan changes (29 CFR 1910.38(f)). Regular drills are still a good way to practice.

29 CFR 1910.38(f)

Scenario

Picture this: A fire alarm sounds in a busy shop. Some workers walk to the front door, which is blocked by a stack of pallets. Another worker goes back to grab his phone. At the meeting spot, the supervisor has no way to tell who is still inside. What should have been done differently?

Crew discussion

1. Where are the two ways out from your work area?
2. Where is our meeting point, and who takes the headcount?
3. What can block our exit routes, and how do we keep them clear?
4. How would we help a visitor or someone who needs extra time?

Bottom line **Know the alarm, know two ways out, keep exits clear and get to the meeting point to be counted.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema: Fire drills and evacuation / Simulacros de incendio y evacuación

Date / Fecha: _____

Trainer / Instructor: _____ Location / Lugar: _____ Company / Empresa: _____

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