

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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Emergency Protocol by Rebecca Harrison, CFO, True House, Inc., based on her BCMC 2003 presentation

When emergency strikes, do you have a plan in place to protect your most important asset—staff?



At BCMC 2003 in Phoenix, I presented a session titled, Emergency Protocol, to an audience of primarily of component manufacturers who either specialize in safety or work/own a small business and wear many hats. I focused on controllable versus uncontrollable disasters and how to develop an emergency response plan (ERP). How quickly you can recover from these disasters depends a great deal on people.

WHAT IS AN EMERGENCY?

An emergency is an unforeseen event or condition requiring prompt action—it can be controllable or uncontrollable. In an emergency, you risk loss of people, property and pay.

CONTROLLABLE DISASTERS

A controllable disaster is one that is right under your nose. It includes your inner circle—people, property and pay (see diagram). These events can be foreseen and every company should have a

safety policy and set of standards in place that addresses these issues. Each standard should focus on hazard prevention.

UNCONTROLLABLE DISASTERS

An uncontrollable disaster is outside of your inner circle. These events can be unforeseen and every company should have a safety policy that addresses these issues.

The first level includes: human error, which is unanticipated; market forces, which contains commodity prices and interest rates; and customer/vendors, consisting of contract services.

The second level pertains to natural and man-made disasters—fires, hurricanes, tornados, flooding, earthquakes and acts of terrorism.

Your primary focus for uncontrollable disasters should be hazard response. By developing an emergency response plan (ERP), appropriate guidelines can be followed in these situations.

DEVELOPING AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

There are many ways to establish an ERP, but it should be kept simple, and of course, tailored to your company's needs. A plan should include these five steps:

- 1. Establish a Planning Team:** Your initial step should be to appoint a senior officer to lead the ERP. A mission statement should be created and published to show management's support and help guide the team with the necessary steps to deliver a plan. The chosen team should include a member from each department.
- 2. Identify & Evaluate the Hazards:** By identifying and evaluating hazards, you are able to determine the team's scope of work. You can research potential hazards through multiple organizations—OSHA, FEMA, your city disaster plan, WTCA and related industry associations (e. g., TPI or NAHB). Next, you need to determine if hazard is controllable or uncontrollable. This will help ensure that controls are in place for controllable hazards and you are able to evaluate the impact of uncontrollable hazards.
- 3. Develop a Plan:** The four phases in developing a plan include: prevention and mitigation, response, recovery, and evaluation. The goal of this phase is to be prepared to react quickly and efficiently, to have predetermined procedures to minimize damage, and to make sure you have adequate insurance. Many objectives should be used when developing prevention and mitigation of a plan:
 - Assign roles and responsibilities
 - Establish communication protocols
 - Establish medical emergency protocols
 - Protect your assets: Employees, equipment, records, etc.
 - Protect your livelihood: Cash reserves and third party backups

The goal of the response phase is to clearly develop step-by-step procedures. Objectives include:

- Determine who will monitor systems
- Develop an internal warning system
- Develop an evacuation plan

The goals of the recovery phase is to: establish communications between the company, employees, and outside resources as quickly as possible; assess and determine damage as quickly as possible; and minimize further damage.

Objectives contain:

- Determine how the communication center will operate during the disaster.
- Determine what information needs to be gathered.
- Determine who will be responsible for securing the site.
- Determine who will be responsible for repairing damage.

The goal of evaluation is to see if your ERP was successful. This entails:

- What went right
- What went wrong and why
- Determine any procedures that were not necessary
- Refine the ERP

4. Communicate the Plan: In order to effectively communicate your plan, it must be distributed and reviewed by all managers and employees. All new employees should receive ERP training in their orientation. The information should not only be reviewed on an annual basis or with any new change, but it should be properly posted throughout the facility.

5. Train All Personnel: Arrange for training classes for all employees that need special skills training, like First Aid and firefighting skills. Practice drills should be conducted at least once a year.

STATISTICS...

- 4,900 workplace fatalities in 2002 due to unintentional injuries.
- 3.69 deaths per 100,000 workers in 2002.
- 3.7 million American workers suffered disabling injuries in 2002.
- Work injuries cost Americans \$146.6 billion in 2002 - \$1,060 per worker.

Source: National Safety Council Report on Injuries in America 2002

BENEFITS OF SAFETY INCENTIVES PROGRAMS

1. Improves overall on-the-job safety results.
 2. Demonstrates concern for individual employee safety.
 3. Creates employees cohesiveness.
 4. Enhances employee teamwork.
 5. Strengthens focus on achieving safety goals.
 6. Rewards and recognizes individual employee efforts.
 7. Reduces employee stress.
 8. Boosts rapport between labor and management.
 9. Provides visible appreciation of employee safety achievements.
 10. Encourages employee to continually contribute new safety ideas.
- (Your first priority in incentives should be to encourage your employees to report every accident, no matter how minor.)

MORE STATISTICS...

- \$22,000 to \$30,000: The average cost of surgery to correct carpal tunnel syndrome.
- \$24,000: The average cost of a lost-time back injury.
- \$180,000: The average cost of back injury requiring surgery.
- Worker's compensation costs are approximately four times the medical costs.
- Muscle and joint pain in 2002 cost employers more than \$60 billion a year in lost productivity.
- Minor safety violations can generate thousands of dollars in fines if they lead to an injury.

Source: National Safety Council Report on Injuries in America 2002

Rebecca Harrison has an accounting degree from the University of Colorado and also earned her CPA license. She worked in the field of public accounting and finance until 1997, when she joined their family business, True House. Rebecca is currently the CFO of the company.

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