

4. Crisis Management Operation

4.1 Why Crisis Management Plan?

In the past there has often been a reluctance to accept that an emergency can happen. Some Management have made tentative plans. In recent years pressures have increased from interested bodies and now management is more inclined to draft contingency plans and provide the equipment and materials to carry them out. The pressures can come from:

- Public opinion
- Health and Safety legislation
- Fire Safety Officers
- Police and Healthcare sources
- Insurance Agencies
- Knowledge of serious incidents in related businesses, and
- The resultant losses
- The workforce

In more recent times, management has had to accept that avoidable negligence is actionable and is the prime responsibility of management. Sometimes criminal charges have been laid against individuals and companies for being negligent. This includes not having proper contingency plans to minimise the effect of an emergency.

4.2 The scale of an emergency

In simple words it is chance, happening or possibility. These words though carry hardly any meaningful purpose for a common folk, but are of paramount interest for the persons related with an industry.

Persons may be performing their assigned tasks carefully, safely and with all their skills and mental alertness but still there happens something unwanted of no-one's fault resulting in



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either loss of production, dislocation of machinery, injuries to persons, loss of life or extensive damage to the property of the industry concerned. Thus the unwanted happening, which dislocates the part of the entire activities of an industry, is called Contingency.

There are three levels of emergency and all contingency plans should reflect the possibility of levels changing. These levels are:

- Emergencies that start and remain small
- Emergencies that start small and then escalate
- Emergencies those are major from the outset.

4.3 Scope of Contingency Planning

The dictionary definition of contingency plan is:

Plans or measures made to handle a particular situation, should it arise.

From this it is possible to infer that every conceivable situation should have a contingency plan. This is not a practical inference and contingency plans, whilst tailored to specific situations, must have some element of flexibility and scope for generalization. The basic framework for a contingency plan should contain provision for.

- Containing the emergency
- Protection of lives and property a Meeting legal requirements
- Re establishing normal operations as soon as possible
- Limiting the "after effects" of the emergency

In addition the contingency *plan* should provide for the involvement of:

- The workforce
- Safety and Environmental specialists
- Emergency services
- Other companies within the area or within the industry
- Local Authorities
- The public

Direct involvement of the public is not normally required-but the passing of information to those of them in the vicinity can be desirable. If public evacuation is required, or any other form of co-operation, the means of distributing the necessary information should be part of the contingency plan.

Any action plan must be based on broad ideas and practicality. A contingency plan is no exception. This will lead to the formation of an outline plan that, in addition to the measures referred to earlier in the guideline, this will include:

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- Identification and nature of the potential incident or risk.
- The maximum anticipated scale of escalation of any such incident.
- Arrangements for controlling the incident and any deviations and/or secondary effects.
- Actions necessary to prevent any recurrence of the incident.
- Where plant is concerned further additional features are:
 - Reference to any operating methods or conditions that could induce an incident or risk.
 - A complete inventory of all hazardous materials and their location.
 - Any special precaution necessary by reason of the hazardous materials or operating methods.

4.4 Emergency Evacuations

When an emergency arises there is a need to evacuate personnel. Depending on the premises and the - situation this can be a simple or a complex operation. In general the situations are:

- Evacuation of persons from their place of work. This is straightforward but should be well drilled.
- Evacuation of staff and customers from a retail store or similar premises. Provided the staff is well trained there should be little trouble but provision must be made for the customers who may be elderly, sick, disabled, prone to panic, very young etc.
- Evacuation from Institutions. Staff in these situations is trained to deal with the type of inmate involved and generally the contingency plan will reflect this.
- Evacuation from places which are open to the public. There are difficulties to categories but would include places of worship, museums, public open spaces, beaches etc. Generally members of the public would exceed the numbers of staff present if, indeed, there were any staff present at all. In such places successful evacuation depends on good communication. Panic can easily occur and the casualty level from an ill conceived evacuation can potentially exceed the casualty rate of the incident itself.

4.5 Types of evacuation

There are two broad causes of evacuation.

- Fire or similar tangible incident
- Bomb threat or other intangible incident

Each has certain characteristics that are not compatible and one plan cannot be used for both. The contingency plan will cater for both types of evacuation as well as a partial evacuation. Re entry following evacuation of a building should also be part of the contingency plan. An evacuation is ordered when there is an immediate danger. Sometimes this danger is not

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readily apparent to the evacuees and therefore degrees of danger must be established.

4.6 Fire evacuation

One requirement of the sound safety drill is that no person should have to move towards a fire in order to evacuate. To this end, escape routes must be planned and routed, directly to the open air. Also assembly areas for persons escaping from a fire should be:

- In the open and,
- Away from danger

These escape routes are subject to legislation as to their fire and smoke resistance. Guideline No. 48 covers this in detail. The contingency plan should follow the appropriate legislation regarding escape routes for fire and should also specify the duties of key personnel during and after the evacuation.

4.7 Fire Wardens

These members of staff, designated as such in the contingency plan, will have the following responsibilities:

- To ensure that all staff, visitors, customers etc. are aware of the state of emergency.
- To direct the above to the nearest approved fire escape route.
- To check their area of responsibility to ensure no persons remain.
- Ensure all doors and windows are closed to prevent the spread of fire.
- To check personnel at the assembly point.
- To report the result of the evacuation and assembly to a designated person.
- To await further orders.

4.8 Security Staff

In a fire evacuation Security Staff will have additional duties. Because of the evacuation additional exits will be used. These exits are often left open after evacuation and, depending on the nature of the business, may attract the opportunist thief. Part of the contingency plan should involve the perimeter security of the building that may have been breached. One member of the Security staff should be nominated as Fire Brigade escort. This duty is particularly important in a large industrial complex. The officer detailed should have the following information available:

- Where the fire is situated.
- Details of best route to the fire.
- Details of any special hazards e.g. unprotected trenches or manholes etc., scaffolding, broken down vehicles, construction work.
- Location of water supplies, risers, inlets etc.

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- He should also be in possession of any keys needed to access the area.
- Details of any persons not accounted for.

4.9 The evacuation drill

Prudence requires practice of the fire evacuation drill, but for it to be fully effective, all staff need to:

- Be aware of its existence
- Know what they must do in an emergency
- Know their responsibilities
- Location of toilets, rest areas, isolated offices, public waiting rooms and the like for checking for possible occupancy.

4.10 The evacuation route

The evacuation route will have been planned in consultation with the local authority such as District Collector or Factory Inspector. He must approve any such route before Evacuation Plan is formally adopted by the management. For the effective evacuation route consideration must be given to:

- Hazardous areas must be avoided.
- Fire and smoke resistant materials must be used in its construction.
- Any changes in the use of the evacuation route must be notified immediately to all the concerned departments.

4.11 Summary

Extensive experience in the chemical industry with on-site emergency planning has provided the need and value of rehearsal of emergency procedures. The organization responsible for developing off-site plan should also test its arrangements in conjunction with on-site exercise. Table - top rehearsals have proved successful in such cases although often requiring sufficient elements of reality in the exercise. Mock Drills must be conducted with all the sincerity and importance.

Every member of the Industry needs to be ready to respond to the demands of the safe practices and should be equally ready to face the contingencies.

Goethe has once said, “Let every one sweep its doorsteps and world will be a cleaner place.”

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