

Teaching Guide

Workplace Fire Safety

for staff



Workplace Fire Safety

Instructor Outline

Introduction

■ Goals:

To ensure that employees are knowledgeable in fire prevention and emergency response in the workplace.

■ Objectives:

Employees should be able to:

- describe the emergency procedures for their facility in case of fire.
- identify common fire hazards in the workplace and how to prevent them.
- identify special situations or individuals in the workplace that may require an emergency response different than the standard response.
- demonstrate how to correctly use a fire extinguisher.
- take part in a company fire drill, and demonstrate the correct emergency response.

■ Materials:

- Your facility's emergency response plan
- Fire extinguisher(s)
- Handouts (obtained from Seattle Fire Department) *Workplace Fire Safety, Fire Extinguishers*
- Video (obtained from Seattle Fire Department) *Evacuation, the Employees Guide to Survival, Fire...In the Workplace and/or How to Select and Safely Use Portable Fire Extinguishers*

Instructor Information

Workplace Fire Facts

- There are approximately 6,000 office fires in the United States each year.
- Major causes of fires in office buildings.

Arson

Pay close attention to security measures. Keep doors and windows locked after business hours. Keep areas around the building - especially alleys and loading docks - well lit and clear of combustibles. Pay attention to housekeeping within the building as well.



Smoking Materials

In areas where smoking is allowed, use large, non-tip ashtrays and make sure everything in them is cold before they are emptied. Be sure that no one leaves smoldering cigarettes on furniture or in a wastebasket.

Wiring & Appliances

Designate an employee to turn off or unplug all appliances - including coffee makers - at the end of each working day. Do not overload outlets, and make sure to replace any broken or cracked electrical cords.



Fire Response Plans

■ **Become familiar with your facility's fire and life safety systems.**

Know which of the following your building has, as well as their location and use:

Manual pull alarms	Fire extinguishers
Smoke detectors	Fire alarm monitoring service
Exit doors & stairwells	Voice alarm
Sprinklers	Fire doors

■ **Common fire and life safety hazards to watch for in the workplace:**

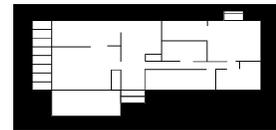
Missing or broken fire safety equipment	Accumulated trash
Burned out exit lights	Open fire doors
	Blocked stairways

■ **Have a fire emergency plan.**

It's nothing difficult, just a well thought out plan that takes into consideration the unique features of each building and its occupants.

This plan should be in writing, and easily available to all employees. This includes those who work weekends and off-shifts. The plan should be kept current through periodic updating.

For further information on developing a fire emergency plan for your business, request the Fire Prevention Bulletin *Guidelines For An Emergency Evacuation Plan* by visiting the www.cityofseattle.net/fire or call the Public Education Office at 386-1337.



When a fire happens...

■ **Treat every alarm as though it is a real emergency, even if the initial source is unknown.**

If the alarm sounds, or a fire is suspected, call the Fire Department immediately. After calling the Fire Department, if you determine that there is no fire, but rather a malfunction of your equipment or a false alarm, call 911 and relay this information. Never wait to investigate the situation before notifying the Fire Department. Any delay will allow a fire to grow and further endanger the building occupants and property.



DO NOT *silence* the alarm until given permission to do so by Fire Department personnel or by the emergency operator. DO NOT *reset* the alarm until the Fire Department arrives and has investigated the source of the alarm. All fire alarms are to be investigated by the Fire Department.

■ **Remember your emergency number - 9•1•1.**

It's important for employees calling 911 to be able to give the following information: nature of the problem, location, address, nearest cross street, any specifics known. The caller should not hang up until told to do so by the emergency operator.



■ **Close doors when exiting.**

By closing doors, you help limit the spread of smoke and fire throughout the building. Doors should be closed by employees as they leave, and by floor wardens assigned to check the floor during an alarm.

■ **Never use elevators during a fire emergency.**

The reason is three fold: 1) elevators often fail during a fire, trapping occupants; 2) elevator shafts may fill with smoke; and 3) the elevator needs to be available for the use of arriving firefighters. Occupants must exit by way of stairwells only. For information on evacuation procedures for non-ambulatory persons, refer to the Seattle Fire Department handout *Fire Evacuation Procedures For Persons Unable To Use Exit Stairwells*.

■ **Establish an employee meeting place.**

It is important to establish an employee meeting place so that all employees can be accounted for after a building evacuation. The meeting place needs to be away from the building, both so that the area is clear for arriving Fire Department personnel and also so that occupants are away from any glass or debris that may fall from the building.

■ **If unable to leave the building, create an area of refuge.**

Seal the room. Use wet cloth to stuff around cracks in doors and seal up vents to protect against smoke. *Do not break windows.* Flames and smoke can come back in from the outside. If you need air, open the window a crack.

Stay low under smoke. The freshest air is near the floor. Keep a wet cloth over your nose and mouth, breath through your nose only.

Signal for help. Use the telephone, or hang something in the window.

■ **Fire extinguishers**

Fire Code requirements specify the size, number and location of fire extinguishers within your facility. These requirements help establish a protection level appropriate for the hazard class of your building. Make sure you know the types, sizes and maintenance requirements of your extinguishers, as well as the basics of extinguisher operation.

Course Outline - Workplace Fire Safety

Keeping the interest of staff members during safety training can be a challenge - especially when you are reviewing information which employees have received in the past. Involving employees in the program is a good way to maintain their interest while increasing their knowledge level on fire safety. Also try limiting the program to under 60 minutes in length.

■ Review your facility's Emergency Response Plan

Make sure all employees have a copy of your facility's written emergency response plan. Review the procedures as a group and make sure that they are clear to everyone.



■ View the video: ***FIRE...IN THE WORKPLACE.***

The main points of the video include:

Fire statistics - why the United States has a fire rate significantly higher than other industrialized countries.

Main causes of fire in the workplace - electrical 39%, arson 21%, smoking 14%

Prevention techniques for the aforementioned common causes.

Employee response to a fire in the workplace - dangers of smoke, using fire extinguishers, alarm reporting, those individuals needing assistance to evacuate.

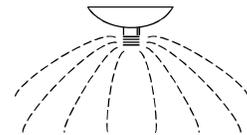
■ Discuss what to do if a fire is discovered

Review the actions to be taken if an employee discovers a fire. Remember to stress the importance of 1) alerting others in the building to begin evacuation, 2) calling 9-1-1 as quickly as possible (even if your alarm system is monitored), and 3) closing all doors as you evacuate.

■ Discuss your building's fire & life safety systems

Does everyone know what and where they are, and how they work? Which of the following does your building have and what is their importance in a fire.

smoke detectors	fire doors
manual pull alarms	alarm system
elevators	sprinklers
stairwells	



■ Identify workplace fire hazards

What can you identify and what precautions should be taken?

■ Hold a fire drill

Hold a fire drill at the conclusion of your program to practice your building escape plan. Providing treats as an incentive may help raise interest.

Course Outline - Fire Extinguishers

- Distribute fire extinguisher handouts.
- View the video *HOW TO SELECT AND SAFELY USE PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS* (10 minutes)
- Examine your facility's fire extinguishers

Provide an example of each type of fire extinguisher found in your building. Discuss the types of extinguishers, their location within the facility, how to access them, and the types of fires on which they would and would not be used. Identify the parts of the extinguishers. Pass them around so that everyone can see and handle them.

■ Demonstrate the use of fire extinguishers

Discuss the conditions under which a fire extinguisher would be used. Points to emphasize: 1) **do not** fight a fire that is larger than a desk in size, is producing black smoke, or that has flames reaching the ceiling; 2) **before** using an extinguisher, *always* make sure that the Fire Department is being called and that the building is being evacuated.

■ Discuss the necessary safety precautions

Identify the rules that must be followed to use a fire extinguisher safely: 1) **always** tell someone to call 911 before using an extinguisher; 2) stay low and keep your back to the exit; 3) if you are unable to extinguish the fire, leave and close the door behind you; 4) **don't force yourself** to fight any fire that makes you nervous. If you don't feel comfortable using a fire extinguisher, help others to evacuate and wait for the fire department to arrive.

■ Discharge extinguishers outside.

If you have extra fire extinguishers available - ones not required for building protection - employees can practice discharging them in an open outdoor area. A garbage can makes a good target and will help contain extinguishing agent if a dry chemical powder is used. Since dry chemical powder can be corrosive to some metals when combined with water, care should be taken not to use it near cars or other equipment. Each person should take a turn removing the pin, aiming the extinguisher, squeezing the handle, and applying the agent in a sweeping motion. Just a few seconds of discharging the extinguisher gives each person a feel for the real thing. Usually several people can use one extinguisher before it runs out.

