

# Merchants: In Case of Emergency

## Make it Your Business to Be Prepared for an Emergency

Emergencies can happen at any time—fire, water main break, civil disturbance, even a communications failure. When these unplanned events happen, it is critical that you and your co-workers know what to do. In an emergency, all employees should know where they need to go and what they need to do. Being prepared for an emergency can limit injuries and damages and help people return to a normal business day.

- Learn about your company's emergency plans. Ensure that a plan is developed if one is not in place. A good plan is outlined later in this section.
- Practice your company's emergency plans in your building. Know at least two exit routes from each room, if possible. Be able to escape in the dark by knowing how many desks or cubicles are between your workstation and two of the nearest exits.
- Know the exit routes and evacuation plans in your building. Know at least two exit routes from each room, if possible. Be able to escape in the dark by knowing how many desks or cubicles are between your workstation and two of the nearest exits.
- Have a designated post-evacuation meeting location where appropriate personnel can take a headcount and identify missing workers. Every employee should be aware of this location.
- Make special emergency plans for co-workers who are disabled, non-English-speaking, or may require assistance during an emergency.
- Know the location of fire extinguishers and medical kits.
- Make a list of important numbers—these can include babysitters, critical business contacts, spouses, etc. Keep a printed list at your desk and near other telephones. Do not rely on electronic lists, direct-dial phone numbers, or

computer organizers that may not work in an emergency.

- Gather personal emergency supplies in an unlocked desk drawer or other easy to reach space, including a flashlight, walking shoes, a water bottle, and nonperishable food—packaged so that it can be easily opened.
- Report damaged or malfunctioning safety systems to appropriate personnel for repair and maintenance.
- Never lock fire exits or block doorways or stairways. Keep fire doors closed to slow the spread of smoke and fire.
- Put together an office phone tree. In the event of an emergency during non-business hours. Your office may need to get information to employees quickly. Develop a list of everyone's home phone numbers with instructions for who will call whom. Make sure everyone keeps a printed copy at his or her home.
- Make plans to help each other. Determine how you will help each other in the event that public transportation is shut down or thoroughfares are impassable. Offer to temporarily house, transport, or feed your co-workers in case of emergency.

## Emergencies in Multi-floor Buildings

- Leave the area quickly following your worksite's evacuation plan. In the event of fire, crawl under the smoke to breath cleaner air. Feel doors for heat before opening them. Never use an elevator when evacuating a burning building. Always go directly to the nearest fire-and smoke-free stairwell.
- If you are trapped in the building, stay calm and take steps to protect yourself. If possible, go to a room with an outside window and telephone for help.
- Open a window if possible, but be ready to shut it if smoke rushes in. Stuff clothing, towels, coats, or newspapers around the cracks in doors to prevent smoke from entering your shelter.