



Understanding Workplace Emergency Alarm Systems

Although typically uncommon, workplace emergencies can happen at any time. When these incidents occur, employees like you may face various safety challenges. It's vital for you to have a thorough understanding of the different measures in place to assist you during such circumstances. This often includes emergency alarm systems.

Alarm systems can help reduce the severity of workplace emergencies and related damage and injuries by quickly alerting everyone on-site of the incident at hand and allowing them to act accordingly, whether that entails an evacuation, lockdown or other safety precautions. When properly installed and maintained, they can be invaluable to your on-the-job safety. However, alarm systems can only be effective if you know what they are and what they indicate.

Audible Alarm Systems

Audible alarms include bells, horns, sirens, announcement systems and other devices that can be distinguished above and apart from normal sound levels. Here's a breakdown of these systems:

- Vibrating bells typically indicate carbon monoxide, smoke or fire alarms.
- Horns are loud, distinctive sounds that immediately attract attention, usually used to identify critical situations.

- Sirens are intense, piercing wails that are generally used to initiate site-wide evacuations.
- Announcement systems are live or recorded voice messages played over speakers, commonly used for phased or guided lockdowns.

Visual Alarm Systems

Visual alarms use flashing, steady or strobe lights that can help alert workers to an emergency in areas where noise levels are high, especially when ear protection is worn and audible signals may not be easily heard or understood. These alarms can also help warn workers with hearing loss of an emergency. Here's a breakdown of these systems:

- Flashing or steady lights may be used in areas where ambient noise makes audible signals difficult to hear. These types of lights may have rotating or flashing lights and different-colored covers to attract increased attention.
- Strobe lights may be used in areas where high ambient light levels make traditional rotating or flashing lights hard to distinguish.

Safety First

Your safety is the first priority. If you see or hear an alarm, immediately follow the appropriate procedures as outlined in your workplace's emergency action plans. Reach out to your supervisor for additional emergency response resources.

Navigating Wet Weather and Walking Surfaces

Wet weather can create dangerous walking surfaces both indoors and outdoors, presenting serious slipping hazards for you and your co-workers. These surfaces may stem from various weather conditions, including heavy rain, snow, sleet, ice or hail.

Slipping on a wet walking surface can result in significant injuries, including bruises, strains and sprains, lacerations, fractures and head trauma.

Fortunately, there are several steps that you can take to ensure safe walking surfaces when wet weather strikes on the job and better protect yourself and others.

Minimizing Wet Surfaces

Each work area is different, so the way you deal with wet walking surfaces may vary. Nevertheless, following these general guidelines is a good start:

- Use provided caution signs to clearly identify when a surface is wet or likely to become wet, and remove this signage as soon as the surface is dry.
- Check for equipment and electrical currents that may not be grounded and wires that are not insulated near wet areas. Never use electrical equipment while standing on a wet surface.
- Use any available floor mats and umbrella stands at building entrances to reduce tracking in water from outside.
- Wear slip-resistant shoes, such as sneakers with deep treads and boots with rubber soles.
- Report any wet areas you notice to your supervisor as quickly as possible.

Handling Slipping Hazards

If you can't avoid walking on a wet surface at work, consider these tips to reduce the risk of slipping:

- Slow down. Rushing through your job assignments is never worth compromising your safety.
- Take small and careful steps to keep your balance centered.
- Walk with your feet pointed slightly outward to form a stable base.
- Make wide turns at corners.
- Use handrails whenever they are available. If they aren't, keep your hands out for additional balance.
- Refrain from multitasking or engaging in any distractions. Stay focused on the surface you are walking on.
- Don't assume the surface is uniform. Be prepared for slick patches.

Contact your supervisor for further workplace safety guidance.