

850 Emergency Action Plans and Fire Prevention and Control

851 **General Responsibilities**

851.1 **Installation Heads**

Installation heads are responsible for implementing emergency action plans and a fire safety program for the protection of people, mail, and postal property. This program must include (but is not limited to) training, education, inspection, enforcement, drills, emergency evacuation teams, written emergency action plans, written standard operating procedures for hazardous materials spills and leaks, and fire prevention plans as required in this subchapter and in accordance with 29 CFR 1910, Subpart L.

851.2 **Managers**

Managers and supervisors must be constantly on the alert for fire hazards or other emergency situations and take immediate corrective action for any unsafe practice or condition. If immediate corrective measures are beyond their capabilities, managers must take short-term precautions to ensure the safety of employees and the protection of the workplace. Conditions that cannot be corrected immediately must be reported to a higher authority for corrective action. Managers must ensure that marked aisles and exits are maintained and clear and that all employees are trained in the evacuation and emergency procedures of the installation, including building emergency alarm systems. Supervisors or managers are responsible for ensuring that personal protective equipment is available to employees who respond to spills and breakage involving hazardous materials.

852 **Emergency Action Plan**

852.1 **Responsibility**

Each postal facility having more than 10 employees on the rolls must maintain an emergency action plan in writing. If there are 10 or fewer employees, the plan may be communicated verbally. Safety personnel/ collateral duty FSC may provide advice and technical assistance, where needed, in the development of such plans. The plan must include designated actions that management and employees are to take to ensure the safety of employees and the protection of property from fire and other emergencies, e.g., tornadoes, earthquakes, hazardous materials (hazmat) spills. (See Management Instruction EL-810-96-1, *Hazardous Materials and Emergency Response*, for establishment of standard operating procedures for spills and leaks and the relationship to Emergency Action Plans.)

852.2 Content

Include the following elements, as a minimum, in the emergency action plan:

- a. Emergency escape procedures, graphic illustrations of emergency escape route assignments, shelters, and location of fire alarms and extinguishers.
- b. Specific procedures to be followed by employees who remain to operate or shut down critical building systems before they evacuate.
- c. Procedures to account for all employees after emergency evacuation has been completed.
- d. Details of any special assignments.
- e. The preferred means of reporting fires and other emergencies based on local procedures and requirements.
- f. Names or regular job titles of persons or departments who can be contacted for further information or explanation of duties under the plan.

852.3 Posting

Post parts (a) and (f) of this plan in a prominent location.

853 Emergency Evacuation Teams and Drills**853.1 Emergency Evacuation Teams****853.11 Organization**

In installations having 10,000 square feet or more, an emergency evacuation team (EET) of postal employees must be maintained on each work tour. EETs may be maintained in smaller installations when warranted by the type of operations conducted. All postal installations having an organized EET must prepare and maintain a written policy statement that establishes the existence of the EET; its basic organizational structure; the type, amount, and frequency of training to be provided EET members; the expected number of members in the EET; and the functions that the EET is to perform at the facility. This statement may be a part of the fire prevention plan.

853.12 Size

The size of the EET depends on the amount of fire-extinguishing and control equipment, the number of exits, and the number of employees on duty. A prearranged schedule must be developed to ensure the availability of the EET.

853.13 Duties of EETs

The organizational statement must clearly indicate that at no time will postal EETs stand and fight any fire beyond the incipient stage, or respond to hazardous materials emergencies. For Postal Service purposes, an incipient fire is one in the initial or beginning stages that can be controlled, contained, or extinguished by portable fire extinguishers without the need for personal protective clothing or self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). The use of

SCBA requires a higher level of skill and training not usually expected of postal employees. Other duties of the EETs include, but are not limited to:

- a. Stopping conveyor belts.
- b. Closing doors to rooms and covers at dump holes and conveyor openings.
- c. Directing the fire department to location of fire.
- d. Evacuating injured and handicapped personnel.
- e. Inspecting the fire site with the fire department to determine that the fire is completely extinguished and that no possibility of rekindling exists.
- f. Moving vans from loading docks.
- g. Shutting down all electrical power to the building or sections as directed by the municipal fire department.
- h. Maintaining perimeter security to prevent reentry until officially instructed to permit it.
- i. Procedures to account for all employees after emergency evacuation has been completed.
- j. Assisting the fire department in maintaining crowd control.

853.14 **Membership**

Building maintenance employees and security personnel should form the nucleus of the EET. Additional personnel may be assigned to assure adequate coverage on all tours. The assigned members are:

- a. *EET Leader*. The installation head is responsible for appointing the EET leader, who should normally be the superintendent for building maintenance or someone in a similar position. The EET leader must establish a procedure to provide quarterly review of the program to ensure operational efficiency.
- b. *Assistant EET Leader*. The EET leader appoints an assistant EET leader.
- c. *EET Members*. EET members are appointed as needed to cover all tours, with an alternate for each member. The alternate should have different off days than the regular member. The EET leader ensures that all persons selected as members of the EET are physically capable of performing the duties that may be assigned to them during training or actual emergencies. Employees with known heart disease, epilepsy, or chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases must not be permitted to participate in any EET activity unless they present a certificate of fitness from their personal physician stating that they are physically capable of performing such duties. Employees with physical disabilities are permitted to be EET members; however, their job assignments must be governed by their ability to perform specific tasks.

853.15 Training

Members are required to complete an initial basic level of training and annual refresher training. Such training and education must be provided to members and alternates before they are expected to perform any EET emergency evacuation team activity. To the extent feasible, Safety and fire department personnel should assist in the establishment and training of the EET. EET leaders and training instructors must be provided training and education that is more comprehensive than that provided to the general membership of the EET. Such training may be available from state firefighting academies and local fire departments. Training for all members must be on the clock and must cover:

- a. Teamwork coordination.
- b. Specific EET duties for each member and alternate.
- c. Familiarization with all fire-extinguishing equipment.
- d. Fire alarm systems and fire and other emergency reporting.
- e. Classifications of fires and the equipment used on each.
- f. Stopping fire along conveyor belts and between work levels.
- g. First aid and rescue procedures.
- h. Conducting EET drills. (EET drills must be conducted at least annually to assure efficiency.)
- i. The facility Hazmat SOP (First Responder Awareness Level).
- j. Special situations, e.g., tornado sheltering, earthquakes, where applicable.

853.16 Exposure

At no time should EET members or alternates perform a task that exceeds their level of skill, ability, or training, or expose themselves or other employees to unnecessary dangers and risks, including hazardous materials emergencies.

853.17 Special Hazards

The EET leader must inform EET members and alternates about special hazards such as storage and use of flammable liquids and gases, toxic chemicals, radioactive sources, and water reactive substances to which they may be exposed during fire or other emergencies. The EET members also must be advised of any changes that occur in relation to the special hazards. The EET leader must develop and make available for inspection by EET members written procedures that describe the actions to be taken in situations involving the special hazards and must include these in the training and education program (see facility written hazard communication program).

853.18 Installations Without EETs (Less Than 10,000 Square Feet)

In installations that do not have EETs, the installation head is responsible for ensuring that supervisors or employees are assigned the following functions in case of fire or other emergency:

- a. Notification of fire department, police, ambulance, or other emergency services.
- b. Prompt evacuation of personnel including injured or handicapped employees.
- c. Procedures to account for all employees after emergency evacuation has been completed.
- d. Security of mail, monies, receipts, and accountable and valuable papers.
- e. Use of fire extinguishers.

853.2 Drills

At least one emergency evacuation must be conducted annually on each work tour. Sheltering drills are appropriate in locations prone to tornadoes or earthquakes. The importance of fire drill training must be impressed upon all postal employees. In conducting fire drills, the following objectives must be met:

- a. Sounding of alarms and prompt notification of fire department, police, or other emergency services.
- b. Orderly evacuation in minimum time.
- c. Security of mail, monies, receipts, and valuable papers.
- d. Emergency plan assignments by designated EET members and alternates.

854 Fire Prevention Plan**854.1 Responsibility**

Each installation head managing a postal facility with more than 10,000 square feet must maintain a written fire prevention plan. Installation heads managing smaller facilities may maintain written fire prevention plans when warranted by the type of operations conducted. Safety personnel/collateral duty FSC may provide advice and technical assistance, where needed, in the development of such plans.

854.2 Content

Include the following elements, as a minimum, in the fire prevention plan:

- a. A list of the significant, potential workplace fire hazards; handling, storage, and control procedures; potential ignition sources (such as welding, electrical equipment, and heaters); and the type of fire protection equipment or system present that can contain, extinguish, or control fires.

- b. Names or regular job titles of personnel responsible for maintenance of equipment installed to prevent or control fires.
- c. Names or regular job titles of personnel responsible for control of fuel-source hazards.
- d. Procedures to be used to control the accumulation of flammable and combustible waste materials and waste residues so that they do not contribute to a fire emergency.

854.3 **Employee Training**

854.31 **General**

Employees must be instructed at least annually, and any time there is a change in the plan or their role, by their immediate supervisor in:

- a. The evacuation and emergency procedures of the installation.
- b. The use of fire-extinguishing equipment. Employees whose work station is in, or adjacent to, high-hazard operations must be trained in the use of appropriate fire-extinguishing equipment for that specific operation.
- c. Good housekeeping practices.
- d. The observance of smoking rules.
- e. Hazmat SOPs using Handbook EL-812, *Hazardous Materials and Spill Response*.

854.32 **Training for the Emergency Action Plan and Fire Prevention Plan**

854.321 **Emergency Action Plan**

To maintain the emergency action plan, a sufficient number of employees must be designated and trained to assist in the execution of a safe and orderly emergency evacuation, and dealing with incidental and emergency releases of hazardous materials in the mails and elsewhere. See MI EL-810-96-1, *Response to Hazardous Materials Releases*. This pool of employees must be kept current.

854.322 **Fire Prevention Plan**

To maintain the fire prevention plan, the immediate supervisor must inform all employees of the fire hazards in the work area to which they may be exposed.

854.323 **Orientation**

The immediate supervisor must orient all newly assigned employees to those parts of the plans that the employees must know to protect themselves in the event of an emergency.

854.324 **Review**

The written plans must be kept at the workplace and be made available for employee review. The emergency action and fire prevention plans must be reviewed with each employee of the installation:

- a. Annually.
- b. Whenever there is a change in employee responsibilities or designated actions under the plans.
- c. Whenever the plans are revised.

855 Fire Inspections**855.1 Responsibility**

Managers and supervisors that have been trained by safety and/or fire protection personnel must conduct fire inspections. Training must include the conduct of inspections, identification of unsafe practices causing fires, and the methods of eliminating or correcting hazards. The installation head is encouraged to seek assistance from local fire officials and permit them to conduct fire inspections and prefire planning programs.

855.2 Frequency

Fire inspections must be conducted in all postal-owned and postal-leased installations. Semi-annual inspections are required in all installations with less than 100 workyears of employment in the regular workforce. Quarterly fire inspections are required in all installations with more than 100 workyears of employment in the regular workforce and VMFs.

855.3 Procedures

Fire inspections may be scheduled to coincide with semiannual or annual safety inspections. They must be documented using fire inspection checklists available in the Safety Toolkit and published periodically.

855.4 Corrective Action

Deficiencies identified in safety checklists must be reviewed by the hazard abatement committee and corrected.

Local authorities must be notified immediately upon discovery of fire hazards that are not under postal jurisdiction, but that affect postal personnel, mail, or property.

856 Alarm Systems and Extinguishers**856.1 Alarm Systems**

Every postal facility must have an established employee alarm system that complies with OSHA Standard 29 CFR 1910.165 and that includes:

- a. Procedures for informing each employee of the preferred means of reporting emergencies, such as manual pull-box alarms, horns, public address systems, radio, or telephones. The installation head must have emergency telephone numbers posted near telephones, on employee bulletin boards, and at other conspicuous locations where telephones serve as a means of reporting emergencies. Where a communication system also serves as the employee alarm system, all emergency messages must have priority over all nonemergency messages.
- b. Procedures for sounding emergency alarms in the workplace. For those installations with ten or fewer employees in a particular workplace, direct voice communication is an acceptable procedure for sounding

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the alarm provided all employees can hear the alarm. Such workplaces need not have a backup system. An alarm device must:

- (1) Give a warning that provides sufficient reaction time for safe escape of employees from the workplace, or the immediate work area, or both.
 - (2) Have the capability of being heard or seen above ambient noise or light levels by all employees in the affected areas of the workplace. Tactile devices may be used to alert employees who would not be able to recognize the audible or visual alarms.
 - (3) Give a distinctive and recognizable signal to evacuate the work area or to perform actions designated under the emergency action plan. If the employee alarm system is also used for alerting emergency evacuation team members or for other purposes, a distinctive signal for each purpose must be used.
- c. Procedures for maintenance and testing of employee alarm systems in compliance with appropriate NFPA and OSHA standards.

856.2 Extinguisher

The number, type, location, maintenance, and inspection of fire-extinguisher equipment and systems must be in accordance with Handbook MS-56, *Fire Prevention and Control*, and 29 CFR 1910.157-1910.163 as required.

Exception: The maximum travel distance to any portable fire extinguisher must not exceed 50 feet.

Fire-fighting equipment that is in damaged or unserviceable condition must be removed from service and replaced immediately.

857 Vehicle Protection

Fire extinguishers and emergency warning kits are to be placed in vehicles in accordance with Handbook PO-701, *Fleet Management*.

858 Codes, Standards, and Ordinances

Compliance with Postal Service standards, OSHA standards, National Fire Protection Codes (NFPA), National Building Codes, and state and local fire codes is required. Managers must refer matters concerning fire prevention, extinguishment, and control, which are not covered by municipal or other regulations, to higher authority for resolution.