Getting the Proper Emergency Equipment Meeting Kit

WORKPLACE EMERGENCY AND EQUIPMENT

A workplace emergency is a situation that threatens workers, customers, or the public; disrupts or shuts down operations; or causes physical or environmental damage. Emergencies may be natural or man-made, and may include hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, wildfires, winter weather, chemical spills or releases, disease outbreaks, releases of biological agents, explosions involving nuclear or radiological sources, and many other hazards.
Many types of emergencies can be anticipated in the planning process, which can help employers and workers plan for other unpredictable situations.
Test your emergency equipment frequently to ensure it’s ready when someone needs it.

SIX CRITICAL STEPS IN EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT USE.

1. Train on proper use

If workers cannot quickly find and operate the nearest emergency equipment, a simple injury can become severe or, even worse, deadly. For example, if not properly trained on emergency protocol, a worker with a serious eye contamination may run to the restroom to rinse out the affected eye. Unfortunately, in the time it could take to reach the nearest restroom, it may be too late and the result could be permanent eye damage. Also, the flow of water from standard restroom fixtures is insufficient to adequately wash contaminants from the injured worker.
First, have a solid emergency response plan in place. Clearly define the different types of hazards on the jobsite and indicate the actions to be taken in the event of an emergency. Next, all employees must be trained on what constitutes an emergency and whether a drench shower or eyewash unit is most appropriate for a particular situation. Most importantly, each person should have an opportunity to test the equipment so he or she feels comfortable activating it.

2. Install within reach

To ensure equipment is used in an emergency, it must be located near potential hazards. The ANSI Z358.1-2004 emergency standard requires emergency equipment be placed within 10 seconds reach of any hazard. As a guideline for placement, an average person can cover about 55 feet in 10 seconds.
To minimize injuries, remove all clutter or obstacles between the hazard and emergency equipment. In addition, fixtures should be on the same level as the hazard. Remember, physically disabled or injured workers cannot go up or down stairs to reach a fixture. For hazards involving a strong caustic or acid, the drench shower or eyewash should be placed immediately adjacent to the hazard. In remote locations without plumbed emergency equipment, such as construction sites, portable units should be supplied. Gravity-fed eyewashes are a good solution and specify units that are designed for easy transportation.

3. Increase visibility

Location is important, but the unit must also be placed in a well-lighted area and have a visible sign for quick identification. Although no specific color is designated for emergency drench showers or eyewashes in either ANSI Z358.1-2004 or the ANSI Z535.1-2002 American National Standard for Safety Color Code, choose a bright yellow color easily found in an emergency. Yellow is the most visible color and is the first color the human eye notices, research suggests.

4. Keep clean and in working order

For optimal performance during an eye emergency, eyewash units must flush contaminants without exposing the infected eye to dust or other contaminants. One of the easiest ways to be sure equipment is in good working order is to conduct the ANSI required weekly and annual testing procedures. Routine testing provides an opportunity to inspect units for corrosion and remove any debris that could pose a problem.
Eyewash dust covers are beneficial for industrial applications where contaminants fill the air. In some cases, dust covers can be retrofitted to current equipment. The dust cover swings back and out of the way when the push handle is activated.

5. Protect users’ privacy

Privacy can be a major factor for a worker choosing not to use an emergency drench shower in an emergency. To be effective, users must disrobe completely to flush contaminants from their skin.
Installing privacy curtains around drench showers or combination shower and eyewash units is an easy and effective way to address the privacy issue. High-visibility yellow vinyl laminate privacy curtains that are chemical and mildew resistant are good for industrial applications. A durable stainless steel curtain rail and mounting brackets can provide strong, corrosion-resistant support.

6. Sound the alarm

To ensure emergency equipment is not only used” but used properly in the event of an emergency to assist users in summoning help from others. An alarm system can be triggered as soon as an emergency fixture is activated. Injured persons can continue flushing without the added worry of calling for help. An added benefit of an alarm system is that it deters vandals from tampering with the emergency equipment.

Check with the manufacturer of your emergency fixtures to determine if there are any other accessories or solutions that will help keep the equipment ready to use in case of an emergency. Proper training, accessibility, visibility, privacy, functionality and signaling can minimize injuries and ensure emergency preparedness.

Key Considerations for Specific Emergency Equipment

Eyewash stations and showers must be easy for an injured person to operate and must work reliably whenever they are needed—so the equipment must be tested weekly.
OSHA's Eye and Face Protection Tool agrees that quick action in response to an eye injury can prevent a permanent disability. "For this reason," it states:

- Emergency eyewashes should be placed in all hazardous areas.
- First aid instructions should be posted close to potential danger spots.
- Employees must know where the closest eyewash station is and how to get there with restricted vision.

Emergency eyewash stations are effective for spills or splashes that are likely to affect only the eyes. Emergency eye/face wash stations are appropriate when a worker's entire face is at risk from spills, splashes, or debris, while drench showers are the best choice when larger areas of the body are at risk. Once a site's potential hazards have been identified, the eyewash and shower needs can be assessed, with the equipment chosen to address the level of exposure to workers and how many workers will be affected.

FINAL WORD

Anything can happen, make sure you have the equipment to be prepared.