*Getting to know your local first responders*

*before an emergency happens is good*

*business. Use the following checklist to help*

*plan your interaction with them.*

**Action to Take Before an Emergency:**

First responders offer many public service and outreach programs, all designed to help them forge good relations with members of the community. Contact your local fire, EMS and law enforcement agencies to learn about these programs and how they can benefit your organization. Take these actions:

* Check the state, county, and municipalities Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans (CEMP). These plans identify hazards that may impact the area.
* Have you reviewed these plans to gain insight into the priorities and actions you can expect public officials and agencies to take if a wide-scale catastrophe occurs?
* Have you used this information to augment the list you developed of work and community specific hazards that are facing your organization?
* Have you contacted first responder organizations in your area and asked to join their training exercises with local business, non-profit institutions, and schools? This will enhance your preparedness effort. Such collaboration will help your organization develop a positive relationship with the first responders in your neighborhood.

Contact the Fire Department and schedule meetings to discuss community outreach programs. Which ones have you arranged to be run at your facility?

* + Fire safety checks.
	+ Review your fire response plan.
	+ Observation of an evacuation or shelter-in-place exercise.
	+ Training programs for staff on the use of fire extinguishers.
	+ Evacuation procedures including assembly areas.
	+ Conduct pre-fire planning.

Law enforcement agencies often provide many security services. Check the ones you have taken advantage of in the past 12 months:

* A security survey covering locks, lighting and access routes to your facility.
* Information on the level of crime in the area.
* Best places to park.
* Guidance on areas to avoid especially at night.
* Recommendations for staff and guest safety in and around your facility.
* How to deal with disgruntled/dismissed staff members.
* What to do if you suspect employee theft.
* The best way to report suspicious activities.

Emergency Medical Service groups provide various services. Which ones have you scheduled?

* First aid and CPR training.
* Programs dealing with medical emergencies at the workplace.

Hospitals and Medical Centers offer onsite lectures and training. Indicate the topics that will be covered in setting such as ‘lunch and learn seminars’ over the next year.

* Health screening programs.
* No cost/low cost public awareness seminars on health issues
* Information on how to avoid stress in the workplace.

Your local health department, the Red Cross and various non-profit organizations provide ongoing education on community health issues. Indicate which actions you are planning to take in the next twelve months:

* Hold a seminar before flu season on coping with epidemics and pandemics.
* If you have people on staff with disabilities and who use service animals, hold an orientation on how to care for service animals and pets during a prolonged crisis.
* If floods are a concern, ask your local Emergency Management Office to provide a speaker on their plans for coping with flood events.
* Keep in touch with your local Canadian Red Cross chapter. They offer presentations which may be suitable for educational meetings that review safety procedures both at work and at home.
* Start a program that encourages community volunteerism.

**Action to Take During an Emergency:**

Be prepared to quickly and clearly brief first responders on the nature of the emergency. During an emergency, are you prepared to answer the following questions?

* What is the nature of the emergency, when did it happen, and where did it occur?
* If the event of a fire, tell responders if anyone is still in the building, their location, and if they need assistance.
* Be prepared to state if utilities such as gas and electric have been shut off.
* Include a floor plan showing the layout of the facility including the basement, entrances and exits in your emergency action plan and make it available to arriving responders. If you have facility keys, turn them over as well.
* If hazardous or flammable materials stored onsite, notify fire officials? If so, where are they kept? If Materials Safety Data Sheets are available, present them.
* Are there any priority objects or materials onsite (example: precious metals, historic relics, religious objects, etc.)? If so, notify the fire department of their location.
* If a medical emergency, provide arriving EMS personnel with as much detail as possible on the person’s condition.
* If a criminal activity (example violence in the workplace) provide the police with detailed descriptions of the people involved, their location, and the nature of the event.

If you have people with disabilities or special needs at the assembly area, in a shelter, or elsewhere in the facility; give the first responders as much information as possible on their location and condition. Include their name and a brief description of the challenges they face. If forced to evacuate your work area and move to either a shelter or an offsite assembly area, are you able to answer questions relating to the number of people in site that qualify as:

* Senior Citizen’s
* People with service animals.
* The number and location of people with mobility Impairments.
* The status of people with cognitive disabilities.
* Staff members or visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing.
* The number and location of those who are visually impaired.
* If any of your staff has severe allergies or chemical sensitivities (e.g., peanut allergy or sensitivity to bee stings).
* Information on staff or visitors for whom English is not their first language.

**After an Emergency:**

Wait for the site to be declared safe to re-enter. Remember that first responders are not responsible for restoring services to your facility.

Are you prepared to dispatch a damage assessment team and bring the emergency to an end? To accomplish this you need to be prepared to take the following actions:

* An assessment team equipped to make determinations on the degree of damage suffered by equipment and other infrastructure.
* Someone representing or in contact with the building owner if the facility is leased or rented.
* Someone familiar with the process for re-starting various utilities including electric and gas services.

Review this checklist before and after emergency exercises and events to determine your level of preparedness to work with local first responders.