

Do You Really Need An Emergency Response Team?

Whether your company is a high-hazard or low-hazard environment all employees are at risk for a number of medical illnesses and trauma related injuries. A 1997 report from the National Safety Council® estimated there were 80 million plus lost workdays due to injuries. This is at a cost of about 127 billion dollars.

Benefit versus cost - Without employee emergency response training or an in-house medical facility injured or ill employees are left untreated until 9-1-1 arrives. An internal response team can provide rapid victim care rather than losing valuable time waiting for 9-1-1 to arrive on scene. Rapid response to an ill or injured employee decreases the likelihood of the victim getting worse, which can lead to greater employer medical costs and lost productivity.



Most of us realize keeping employees safe and well trained provides effective returns to your company. Some say "What if I train my employees and they leave the company?" - the answer is "What if your don't train them and they stay". Moreover it's the law to provide appropriate emergency training to employees.

OSHA regulations (CFR 1910.151 (b) require businesses to provide first aid and CPR training to employees in the absence of a nearby (proximity) - clinic or hospital - proximity to OSHA means within three minutes. Many companies rely on the close proximity (to meet this regulation) of their local fire department, some located within blocks of their facility. The truth is; unless 9-1-1 is literally sitting in your lobby they will not be able to get to your ill or injured employee within that three-minute window.

Remember it doesn't matter that fire personnel or paramedics pull up to your building within three minutes, what matters is when they actually make patient contact. Having a fire house a couple of blocks from your site doesn't replace the need for CPR/First aid training for your employees.



While safety always begins with prevention, of course not every work-related injury can be prevented. One goal must be to give your employees the necessary skills they need to care for an ill or injured person until 9-1-1 arrives.

OSHA states: "The outcome of occupational injuries depends not only on the severity of the injury, but also on the rendering of first aid care, Prompt, properly administered first aid care can mean the difference between life and death, rapid vs. prolonged recovery, and temporary versus permanent disability." OSHA requires site-specific training related to your risks and exposures.

An established ERT team is one of the few methods to help insure an ill or injured employee will receive basic care within the required three-minute window. To help determine the number of ERT's needed at your site, one method is to briskly walk from one point at your site to the furthest point and time it. Should it take more than three-minutes, you simply need more ERT members between your starting and ending points. This method will also help determine where to place your response equipment.



Although OSHA outlines requirements for first aid in an occupational setting it remains the responsibility of the employer to determine what those programs should be, how many employees should be trained and how often. To assist with this, National Guidelines for First Aid in an Occupational Setting (see www.lifesafety.com, client forms and support link) was developed in 1997 and updated November 1998, a 147 page document.



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These guidelines outline the minimum knowledge and skills necessary for an employee to provide basic life support care to an ill or injured person until 9-1-1 arrives. As with Life Safety Associates® there are safety and training organizations that provide OSHA accepted programs that meet or exceed this 147 page guideline.

Steps to develop an emergency response team

Start with senior management awareness and approval to move forward. You of course ultimately need their blessing and support.

All steps may not be needed for your organization nor will they necessarily be in the order that works best for you. However this is the start of an infrastructure that will develop an effective and long lasting ERT.

To determine the number of ERT members you need and the type of training they should have read on or you can call Life Safety Associates® toll free 888.552.5433. Answer a handful of questions and we will run your answers through our custom ERT algorithm and have our recommendations to you in just a couple of minutes.

STEPS

- ☐ **Determine your site needs**
- ☐ **Identify the types of responses expected**
 - Medical - heart attack, stroke, diabetic emergencies, seizures, etc.
 - Trauma - machinery accidents, slips, trips and falls, crushing injuries, electrical, etc.
 - Hazardous materials - spills, containment, exposures, etc.



☐ **Determine how many team members will be needed**

- Remember to measure distance and time as suggested on the previous page
- Risk-Base Plan

High-Risk

- A large complex of 100,000 + square feet including high rise structures and/or multiple buildings
- Having 500 or more employees, contractors/visitors with multiple shifts
- Work hazards are common place including Haz Mat
- 9-1-1 patient contact takes five plus minutes

Moderate-Risk

- Multiple buildings, moderately complex
- Having less than 500 employees, contractors/visitors
- Work hazards are common place limited Haz Mat
- 9-1-1 patient contact takes five plus minutes



Low-Risk

- Limited and/or small buildings limited complexity
- Having less than 200 employees, contractors/visitors
- Minimal hazards - little or no Haz Mat - typical R&D/Admin
- 9-1-1 patient contact takes less than five minutes



Industry standards and averages vary from 1% to 20% of your population that should be trained. This wide spread is based on several variables;

- Daily on campus head count including visitors and contractors, (remember to factor in illness, vacation, travel)
- Growth projections
- Termination projections
- Employee mobility
- Number of shifts your operation has
- Number of buildings and floors
- Location of buildings - campus or off-site
- Emergency and risk exposure potential - types of incidents
- Average number of OSHA recordable injuries per month
- Mean age of your employee base
- 9-1-1 response time to your facility
- Type of facility
 - Mostly administration & R&D
 - Warehouse or manufacturing location not meeting type three hazards
 - Significant physical or chemical hazards
 - Treatment storage or disposal site (TSD)
 - Regulated or voluntary clean up site / Chemical spills that could cause significant harm

Of course budget and time constraints are always an issue. For companies with very large employee populations the industry standard is typically 1% - 3%. An example, a company with 1800+ employees, 5+ buildings, etc. would typically average 1%-3% of their employee population to be trained as ERT members. In this case that's about 25-50 members.

A low risk environment would train closer to 25 ERT's. A higher risk environment would consider up to 50 team members. Most companies having 30-35 as an average. Conversely, a company with 150 employees with one or two buildings would train about 8%-10% of their population or a team of about 12. With smaller populations, smaller buildings, limited risks, etc., you should consider at least 10 ERT members so they can function as a team.

- ☐ Determine training titles and hours of training needed - your selected vendor can guide and make recommendations for this
 - Includes core training for new ERT members
 - Ongoing training; monthly, quarterly
 - Annual site drills
 - Refresher training annually or every two-years
- ☐ Identify support equipment and supplies
Cell phones or pagers, ERT response bags, vests, lobby bags, etc.
- ☐ Identify overall time commitment
- ☐ How much of the ERT development and training will be in-house versus outsourced?
- ☐ Develop parameters for a Scope of Work to embed in a Request For Proposal (RFQ)



- ☐ Develop vendor selection criteria and send out your RFQ
- ☐ Identify costs including soft or indirect cost for lost production time related to training ERT personnel
- ☐ Prepare and deliver the proposal for final management approval and to release a budget
- ☐ Implement your vendor selection process
- ☐ Draft a letter for a senior VP or higher indicating management support for your ERT members. This should go out for signature to all lower managers and supervisors to secure their support in releasing their employees for training
- ☐ Develop control methods (Excel spreadsheet) for Recordkeeping of ERT personnel, equipment and incident reports
Include a separate function to benchmark, maintain quality control, and insure an ongoing needs assessment
- ☐ Begin your marketing campaign to build your team membership
Determine ERT member saturation and deployment goals - building- to-building, site wide, etc.





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Recruitment letter

- Roles and responsibilities, training titles, hours required, etc. delivered via:
 - a. Broadcast email
 - b. Referrals from any existing ERT members
 - c. Staff meetings
 - d. LunchTime Programs
 - e. Offer general population CPR training as a resource pool
 - f. Distribute fliers and place promotional posters
 - g. Choose by department with managers input



Consider an ERT Steering Committee

- They will become your Leaders or Champions
- Unless you're wearing only one-hat in your job position (and we know you're not) let them have ownership of the team - you guide and direct and let them run it. ERT ownership sustains the team over time and frees you up to manage your other responsibilities.



Develop a site-specific ERT written response plan

ERT Members - orientation booklet

- (a) ERT application with managers' sign off
- (b) Roles & responsibilities
- (c) Maintaining membership
- (d) Incident response procedures
- (e) Post incident procedures
- (f) Reports
- (g) Critiquing
- (h) Debriefing
- (i) Restocking
- (j) Deactivating





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Consider an ERT Web site within your Intranet Content

- (a) About your ERT
- (b) Management commitment
- (c) Program goals & objectives
- (d) ERT membership requirements
- (e) Required training and hours
- (f) Response guidelines & procedures
- (g) Training content
- (h) Training schedule
- (i) Register for training link
- (j) Online quizzes
- (k) Equipment allocation & restocking
- (l) Report forms



Other elements:

- ERT steering committee, leader functions, etc. Significant achievements
- Upcoming events
- List of team members
- List of response equipment



Once your team is up and running

- Project out year two and beyond
- Budget, additional training, retention, recruitment, adjusting your basic benchmark
- Vendor evaluation should be done at least annually
- ERT steering committee members should be rotated at least annually
- Update ERT written plans annually or as needed



An existing fractured ERT - time to shake them out

Who's really there?

- Who is active and who is not - what's your real headcount?
- Resurrect them
 - Get your infrastructure sound first
 - Romance and push them
 - Determine status; Active, Inactive, Deactivate
 - Recruit & retain

There are two basic choices when developing your ERT. One, you throw time at it or you throw money at it.

Of course the combination of both in partnership with your training vendor is the most effective option. If you need support getting your ERT off the ground or to retain and maintain them, give us a call or email.

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