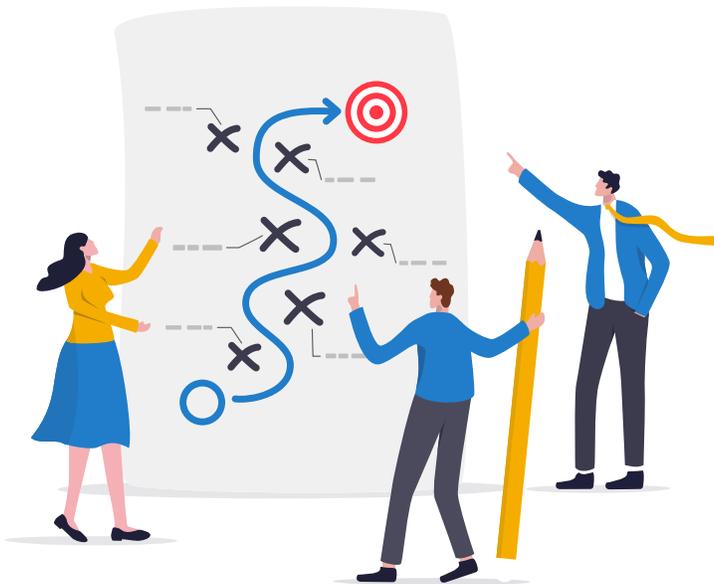# Create Your Own Emergency Response Plan

Creating an effective emergency response plan is a proactive step that can save lives, minimize harm to your team, and ensure operations bounce back quickly after any emergency.

Our guide will help you create an emergency response plan customized to your organization's unique needs.

What type of emergency are you planning for?

Your emergency response plan can be as simple or as comprehensive as you need it to be. First, you must decide what you're planning for.

Common emergency events include:

· Inclement weather events
· Health & safety emergencies
· Natural disasters
· Cybersecurity breaches
· Facility and utility disasters

We'll walk you through the elements of an airtight emergency response plan so you can prepare for any emergency.

Step 1 | Assess Your Risk

IDENTIFY

List all possible emergencies that could affect your organization.

Use the list above to get you thinking. Natural disasters, fires or explosions, hazardous material spills, and cyberattacks are all good places to start.

EVALUATE

Assess the likelihood and impact of each emergency.

Organize your list from most likely to least likely.

For example, a cybersecurity breach may be far more likely than a chemical spill in an office setting.

PRIORITIZE

Rank the risks based on their potential impact and likelihood of occurring to focus your planning efforts.

While you'll want to be prepared for any eventuality, focusing your efforts on the most likely events will make planning for less likely events quicker and easier.

Step 2 | Assemble Your Team

DESIGNATE

Decide who will help with what. Select team members from various departments for their diverse perspectives and to diffuse responsibility.

Play to each individual's strengths: Your HR team member can work with people, your security team member can assist with safety measures, and your communications team member can disseminate information.

DELEGATE

Once you have your emergency plan more clearly determined, you can assign specific tasks and responsibilities to each chosen team member.

Empower team members to be responsible for their own departments in emergency planning.

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Step 3 | Develop Your Plan

IDEATE

What's your chain of command? You'll want to define a clear decision-making process to be enacted during an emergency.

Outline specific actions for different types of emergencies (evacuation procedures, lockdowns, shelter in place, etc.).

COMMUNICATE

What's the flow of communication? Develop a strategy to inform employees, stakeholders, and emergency services of the emergency.

Create an emergency contact list, and select the appropriate communication tools — like alert apps, automated voice/text messages, and emails — to share important information.

Ensure multiple backup communication methods are in place.

ALLOCATE

Identify and allocate necessary resources.

These include, but are not limited to:
· First aid kits
· Emergency supplies
· Backup power sources
· Light sources
· Food stores
· Water
· Medications

Your emergency resources will ultimately be determined by your team's size and needs.

EVACUATE

No emergency response plan is complete without this step. Map out and mark evacuation routes, and designate safe assembly points. Plan alternative recovery steps in case your primary routes become obstructed.

Step 4 | Work Your Plan

PRACTICE & TRAIN

Once you have your team members assembled, deploy them to educate employees about the emergency response plan, their roles, and the procedures they need to follow.

Regularly schedule and execute emergency drills (like fire or active shooter drills) to practice and refine the plan.

Remember, practice makes perfect!

ITERATE & IMPROVE

After each drill or real emergency, review performance and identify areas for improvement.

Ask your team to assess employee performance, or have employees assess their own areas of weakness. Update your emergency response plan accordingly.

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Step 5 | Share Your Plan

CONNECT

Take time to establish relationships with local emergency services including:

- Fire departments
- Police departments
- Hospitals
- Shelters

By making these connections, not only will you know who to call, but emergency responders will also know who's calling on them.

COOPERATE

Consider the relationships you have with your neighbors as well. Are you in a business park, a residential area, or a major city?

Your surroundings will determine your response to an emergency, so it's important to know if you can cooperate with or lean on your neighbors in times of crisis.

Step 6 | Maintain Your Plan

REVIEW & REFRESH

Periodically review and update your plan to reflect new risks, changes in operations, or lessons learned from drills and actual events. Determine a review schedule that works best for your company's needs — whether quarterly, annually, or as needed.

RECORD & RELAY

Keep records of any changes made to your plan, and ensure everyone stays informed of updates. Gather employees to go over new or updated emergency protocols.

Additional Elements to Consider

The steps we've outlined will give you a solid start to drafting your emergency response plans. Here are a few additional elements you may want to include in your plans:

- **Business Continuity Plan:** How will your business function during and after an emergency?
- **Post-Incident Recovery:** What measures of support will be needed for affected employees? What steps need to be taken to restore normal operations?
- **Compliance and Legal Requirements:** Does your plan comply with the relevant regulations and business standards of your industry?
- **Necessary Certifications:** If CPR or first aid services will be needed, are enough of your employees trained to assist?

The more questions you ask yourself, your team, and your employees, the better prepared you'll be for any emergency.

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