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Emergency Preparedness Plan

The United States knows that Mother Nature can be merciless. From the deadly hurricanes in Tornado Alley to the wildfires of the West, many states are exposed to different hazards and vulnerable to natural disasters. In fact, 56 severe thunderstorms, 20 flash floods, 16 wildfires, 9 winter storms, and 5 cyclones occurred in 2018. Disasters can take a variety of forms, whether natural or man-made, and their impact on business is devastating. These disasters and emergencies can severely affect you and your family's lives and financial wellness. What can you do to prepare for emergency disasters on-site?

Make a List of Worst-Case Scenarios

One of the first things you need to do when developing a disaster preparedness strategy is to ask, "What is the worst thing that could happen to our construction site?" This is the best starting point that provides a solid foundation for site-specific disaster preparedness plans. For example, is the job site located near a fault line where earthquakes may occur? Are there hazardous chemicals that can be set on fire or spill and cause injuries to workers and third parties? Is it hurricane season and is the area prone to flooding?



Develop an Emergency Preparedness Checklist

After identifying the worst-case scenarios, the next step is to develop a disaster preparedness checklist that can help you organize your overall emergency response strategy. Here are some things you need to include in your checklist:

- Are employees trained in basic first aid and CPR techniques?
- Do your employees have defined roles in the event of a disaster?
- Do you have the contact details of relevant emergency response groups (e.g. local police, fire department, emergency medical service organizations)?
- Are vulnerable areas on the construction site identified?
- Do you have an established chain of command?
- Do you have sufficient communication infrastructure that will still work in case of emergencies?
- Do you have the contact details of employees, clients, and suppliers?
- Do you have the necessary safety equipment?

- Do you have an established evacuation route?
- Does the site have a stockpile of emergency supplies?

Train Employees in Disaster Preparedness

Your construction site employees are on the front lines when dealing with a disaster. For this reason, you need to include your employees in the planning phase. Your employees have experience and valuable insight about potential hazards on the site and how you can improve your disaster preparedness. After developing your disaster preparedness plan, you should train your employees to follow the procedures specified in it. This should include the evacuation process, the use of emergency equipment, the location of first-aid supplies and emergency provisions, and the contact details of key individuals and emergency response teams. The company should also regularly hold seminars about disaster preparedness. You may invite relevant organizations such as your local fire department and emergency response teams to speak about the best practices in dealing with specific disasters and emergencies. Finally, all these training sessions should be reinforced with practice drills and emergency response simulations to ensure the site is well prepared.

Establish a Central Command Post

Communication and decision-making are severely hampered during a disaster. So, before disaster strikes, you need to establish a central command post where the flow of communication and decision-making can be referred to by employees and emergency response teams. This post should have the necessary communications equipment, site plans, and documents that will aid in taking back control of the situation. It should also have a list of employees and their contact information, as well as emergency backup power in case power lines get cut off.



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