



Understanding Workplace Emergency Alarm Systems

Although typically uncommon, workplace emergencies can happen at any time. When these incidents occur, employees like you may face various safety challenges. It's vital for you to have a thorough understanding of the different measures in place to assist you during such circumstances. This often includes emergency alarm systems.

Alarm systems can help reduce the severity of workplace emergencies and related damage and injuries by quickly alerting everyone on-site of the incident at hand and allowing them to act accordingly, whether that entails an evacuation, lockdown or other safety precautions. When properly installed and maintained, they can be invaluable to your on-the-job safety. However, alarm systems can only be effective if you know what they are and what they indicate.

Audible Alarm Systems

Audible alarms include bells, horns, sirens, announcement systems and other devices that can be distinguished above and apart from normal sound levels. Here's a breakdown of these systems:

- Vibrating bells typically indicate carbon monoxide, smoke or fire alarms.
- Horns are loud, distinctive sounds that immediately attract attention, usually used to identify critical situations.

- Sirens are intense, piercing wails that are generally used to initiate site-wide evacuations.
- Announcement systems are live or recorded voice messages played over speakers, commonly used for phased or guided lockdowns.

Visual Alarm Systems

Visual alarms use flashing, steady or strobe lights that can help alert workers to an emergency in areas where noise levels are high, especially when ear protection is worn and audible signals may not be easily heard or understood. These alarms can also help warn workers with hearing loss of an emergency. Here's a breakdown of these systems:

- Flashing or steady lights may be used in areas where ambient noise makes audible signals difficult to hear. These types of lights may have rotating or flashing lights and different-colored covers to attract increased attention.
- Strobe lights may be used in areas where high ambient light levels make traditional rotating or flashing lights hard to distinguish.

Safety First

Your safety is the first priority. If you see or hear an alarm, immediately follow the appropriate procedures as outlined in your workplace's emergency action plans. Reach out to your supervisor for additional emergency response resources.

Navigating Wet Weather and Walking Surfaces

Wet weather can create dangerous walking surfaces both indoors and outdoors, presenting serious slipping hazards for you and your co-workers. These surfaces may stem from various weather conditions, including heavy rain, snow, sleet, ice or hail.

Slipping on a wet walking surface can result in significant injuries, including bruises, strains and sprains, lacerations, fractures and head trauma.

Fortunately, there are several steps that you can take to ensure safe walking surfaces when wet weather strikes on the job and better protect yourself and others.

Minimizing Wet Surfaces

Each work area is different, so the way you deal with wet walking surfaces may vary. Nevertheless, following these general guidelines is a good start:

- Use provided caution signs to clearly identify when a surface is wet or likely to become wet, and remove this signage as soon as the surface is dry.
- Check for equipment and electrical currents that may not be grounded and wires that are not insulated near wet areas. Never use electrical equipment while standing on a wet surface.
- Use any available floor mats and umbrella stands at building entrances to reduce tracking in water from outside.
- Wear slip-resistant shoes, such as sneakers with deep treads and boots with rubber soles.
- Report any wet areas you notice to your supervisor as quickly as possible.

Handling Slipping Hazards

If you can't avoid walking on a wet surface at work, consider these tips to reduce the risk of slipping:

- Slow down. Rushing through your job assignments is never worth compromising your safety.
- Take small and careful steps to keep your balance centered.
- Walk with your feet pointed slightly outward to form a stable base.
- Make wide turns at corners.
- Use handrails whenever they are available. If they aren't, keep your hands out for additional balance.
- Refrain from multitasking or engaging in any distractions. Stay focused on the surface you are walking on.
- Don't assume the surface is uniform. Be prepared for slick patches.

Contact your supervisor for further workplace safety guidance.



Live Well, Work Well

September 2025

Are You Prepared for an Emergency?

Disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes can strike with little or no warning. Roads may become impassable, power could be out for days and emergency services might be overwhelmed. In these situations, having a plan can make all the difference between chaos and calm.

September is National Preparedness Month, so make a plan for if you need to evacuate your home or get trapped inside for days.

Preparedness isn't just about stocking up on supplies; it's about knowing what to do, where to go and how to stay safe. Consider these five key steps to help you and your household prepare:

1. **Know your risks.** Understand the types of disasters most likely to affect your area. In the Midwest, tornadoes and floods are common. Coastal regions may face hurricanes, while the West Coast is more prone to earthquakes and wildfires.
2. **Create a communication plan.** Make sure every member of your household knows how to reach each other during an emergency. Choose an out-of-town contact person and

establish meeting points in case you're separated.

3. **Assemble an emergency kit.** Your kit should include nonperishable food and water (enough for at least three days), flashlights and extra batteries, basic first-aid supplies, medications and personal hygiene items, important documents (e.g., IDs and insurance papers) in a waterproof container, and a battery-powered radio.
4. **Plan for evacuation and shelter-in-place.** Know your local evacuation routes and shelters. Also, prepare for scenarios where you may need to stay inside your home for several days. Keep extra blankets, a manual can opener and entertainment for kids, if needed.
5. **Include pets in your plan.** Don't forget your furry family members. Ensure you have food, water and any medications they need, and identify pet-friendly shelters in advance.

Visit the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (known as FEMA) website, [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov), to learn more about preparing for emergencies at home, at work and on the road.

UV Index and Sun Safety

Spending time outdoors can be great for your health and well-being, but protecting your skin from the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays is important. One of the most effective ways to do this is by understanding and using the UV index, a daily forecast that measures the strength of the sun's UV radiation.

The UV index is reported on a scale from 0 to 11+. The higher the value, the greater the potential for harm from unprotected sun exposure.

Children, older adults, and people with fair skin or certain medical conditions may be especially vulnerable to high UV levels. Here's how to use the UV index proactively:

- **Check the index in the morning.** Many weather apps and websites display the UV index alongside the daily forecast.

Combating the "September Scaries"

As summer fades, individuals may experience a case of the "September Scaries," emotional and psychological stress that occurs with the transition from summer to fall. This phenomenon can happen as kids return to school, work intensifies, the days get shorter and the holiday season looms.

This seasonal transition disrupts routines and can trigger a sense of loss of freedom, sunshine and overall spontaneity. The return to rigid schedules and looming responsibilities may heighten stress, especially for those juggling work, family and other personal responsibilities. Consider these tips for managing stress during the seasonal transition:

- **Write down your worries.** First, it's important to understand what's making you feel worried. Then, you can evaluate if it's rational or not.

- **Adjust your schedule when possible.** If the UV index is high (6 or above), plan outdoor activities for early morning or late afternoon, when the sun's rays are less intense.
- **Take extra precautions when the index spikes.** On days with a very high or extreme rating, minimize direct exposure and prepare accordingly with strong sun protection.
- **Watch for environmental amplifiers.** Snow, sand, water and even pavement can reflect UV rays and increase your exposure.

Checking the UV index as part of your daily routine can help you reduce your risk of sunburn, premature aging and skin cancer while still enjoying time outdoors. Contact your doctor for more information.

- **Establish routines.** A routine can help you feel more in control and get you back on track for a solid season. Try to have some fun on the weekends, like making plans with friends, so you have something to look forward to.
- **Practice self-care.** This transition is also a good time to reinforce healthy routines like sleep hygiene, nutrition and movement. This practice can help you feel more physically and mentally prepared to take on challenges.
- **Embrace seasonal changes.** Enjoy fall activities, such as picking pumpkins and apples, hiking outdoors, baking with seasonal goods and watching the leaves change.

If you have any concerns about your well-being, reach out to a mental health professional.