

# Emergency Preparedness

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## Preparing for Emergency Situations

In the event of an emergency are you prepared? Would you know what to do?

Do not wait until an emergency to determine if you are prepared. Preparing in advance will maximize food safety, effective communication, minimize loss of assets, minimize business interruptions while providing trained personnel to react properly before, during and after an emergency.

## What Is Considered An Emergency?

An abnormal event or threat of an event of a severity and magnitude that it may result in deaths (including animals), injuries or disease, property damage, environmental damage, and/or a disruption of critical operations.

## During An Emergency :

- individuals must exercise good judgment and due diligence for all decisions made and actions taken;
- all legislation remains in force and must be respected; and
- all decisions made and actions taken must respect laws as well as instructions from government.

## Legal Review

You may wish to have a legal review of all plans and agreements before they are finalized.

## Phases of Emergency Preparedness

There are four phases of emergency preparedness:

1. research
2. planning (includes development of the plan)
3. implementation (includes providing the resources necessary to execute the plan, as well as training for it)
4. validation

## Research

Research includes a review of all relevant directives, charters and by-laws to determine your legal roles and functions, identification of vulnerable areas and whether your operation possesses or has access to the required resources.

## Planning

There are ten principles of emergency planning:

1. Planning is a continuous process.
2. It attempts to reduce the unknowns in problematic situations.
3. It aims to evoke appropriate actions.
4. It is based on what is likely to happen.
5. It is based on valid knowledge.
6. It should focus on general principles.
7. It is an educational activity.
8. It always has to overcome resistance.
9. Plans must be tested.
10. Planning is not management.

## Implementation

Once the plan is approved by senior official(s) in the operation, it is necessary to determine who has access to the plan. It is essential that the plan be distributed to all members of your emergency measures team and any other group which may be affected by your plan.

## Planning Criteria

An emergency preparedness program:

- must respect federal, provincial and municipal legislation, organization mandates, and their emergency roles and responsibilities;
- must respect current plans to the maximum extent possible;
- should involve the persons and organizations expected to contribute to, or be affected by the emergency plan;
- should be based on accepted emergency management principles; and
- should address the full scope of the hazards to which the organization could be expected to respond.

## Writing the Plan

Emergency plans should be standardized and use accepted terminology.

Emergency plans should contain: roles, responsibilities, and the emergency team.

## Training

Once the Emergency Plan has been developed it is essential that all responders receive training on their roles and responsibilities

## Resources

It is necessary to ensure that the organization possesses, or at the time of the emergency can gain access to, all of the necessary equipment, personnel and facilities.

It is possible to obtain these resources in one of three ways:

### 1. equipment and personnel are owned by or work for your company

### 2. borrowing the required resources from another company

If personnel or equipment will be borrowed for an emergency, it is best to negotiate a Mutual Aid Agreement or a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) during the planning process.

### 3. renting the equipment for the emergency operation

If the decision is made to rent the equipment, then it is necessary to determine what is available in the local area for rent, and how the resources can be accessed outside normal working hours.

A listing of equipment and organizations should be included in the procedures that are developed to support the plan.

## Validation

Once the plan and its supporting procedures and checklist have been developed, it is essential to test them under simulated emergency conditions to determine their validity. This is done by executing the plan. The aim of the exercise is to test the plan, procedures and checklists and to practice the responses. This should be an ongoing process. It is not practical to test all emergency functions (objectives) during every exercise. Therefore, the exercise program should be designed to test all key emergency functions over a period of three to five years.

Immediately following an exercise, it is necessary to participate in a debrief to determine where improvements are needed. When changes to your plan, procedures or checklists are needed, you may need to return to the research phase of emergency preparedness.

## Additional Information

For further information on emergency preparedness visit the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs website at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/research/risk/emergency.html> or call 1-888-466-2372 ext. 64554.