Disaster and Emergency Preparedness

No one likes to think about disasters. We tend to think they won't happen to us. But the truth is, disasters do happen, often when we least expect them. It takes a little time to become familiar with what you should do in response to a disaster. Your response in a disaster situation could mean the difference between life and death, not just for you, but for many others as well.

Disasters are of two basic types: internal and external. Do you know the difference between the two? Can you give examples of each? Fire, radiological mishaps and severe weather conditions are examples of internal disasters. Civil disturbances and airplane crashes are examples of external disasters; they result in a large influx of patients to hospitals in areas where they occur. Fire, electrical power loss, severe weather conditions and bomb threats are some of the more frequent types of disasters we must cope with. How many of you are familiar with the company's written procedures for these disasters?

What should you be doing to plan for disasters?
Familiarize yourself with the disaster plan and review it frequently. Know what actions you and others working in your immediate environment should take in response to the various types of disasters in the plan.

Participate in emergency/disaster drills; they are a very important part of planning for disasters. In fact, the very best plans may not be helpful at all if they are not rehearsed. In the event that a disaster does occur, carry out your responsibilities as indicated by the disaster plan without delay; be alert for additional instructions.

Here is one type of disaster we may be called upon to deal with.

Tornadoes
Who knows the difference between a tornado watch and a tornado warning? Tornado watches are announced by weather stations when conditions in the area are right for the development of a tornado.

This announcement does not mean that a tornado is on the way. If a tornado watch is announced, you should close drapes in your work area -- this is to prevent flying glass and objects from hitting people if a tornado develops; be alert for further instructions.

If a tornado warning is issued, you should move employees to interior corridors and close doors to rooms that have windows. You should remain in the interior corridors and wait for further instructions. Should conditions require it, you may be requested to move employees to lower levels of the building.

We can never predict with certainty when disasters will occur. All we can do is attempt to minimize damage to life and property. Management is responsible for formulating a well-developed plan for each type of disaster that may be encountered, and your responsibility is to be thoroughly familiar with each plan so you can carry out the plan immediately. Remember, your life and the lives of others depend on it.