

Managing the Regulatory Environment

ADA's Guidelines for Practice Success™ (GPS™)

ADA Tip Sheet on Emergency Preparedness

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is a division of the Department of Labor and is responsible for overseeing laws that require employers to provide their employees with working conditions that are free of known dangers. OSHA sets and enforces protective workplace safety and health standards and provides information, training and assistance to workers and employers.

The agency specifically requires employers with 11 or more employees to have a written Emergency Action Plan and offers an [Evacuation Plans and Procedures eTool](#) to help employers develop and implement effective plans. Information on these seven topics is available online from the agency:

- [Minimum Requirements](#)
- [Develop & Implement an Emergency Action Plan \(EAP\)](#)
- [Evacuation Elements](#)
- [Fight or Flee?](#)
- [Shelter-in-Place](#)
- [Fire, Rescue, and Medical Services](#)
- [Reporting Emergencies](#)

It's a good safety precaution for dentists and all members of their teams to be familiar with the various components of OSHA's emergency preparedness regulations. A few elements to keep in mind include:

- The practice's written Emergency Action Plan should include:
 - ✓ a protocol for reporting fires and other emergencies
 - ✓ an alarm system that can be heard throughout the practice
 - ✓ clearly marked escape routes
 - exits should be unobstructed
 - there should not be any locks that would prevent escape from the building
 - no exits route should ever require people to pass through rooms that lock
 - all exits must be clearly marked with readily visible exit signs
 - exit signs must:
 - display the word "EXIT" in lettering at least 6 inches high and 3/4 inch wide
 - be illuminated by a reliable light source
 - directions to exits must be marked if the direction to the route is not readily apparent
 - ✓ procedures to account for all employees when evacuation is complete
 - ✓ rescue and medical duties for any employee charged with performing those functions
 - ✓ whom to contact for more information
- Other recommendations include:
 - ✓ having a written emergency preparedness plan
 - post fire evacuation plans
 - select a meeting point outside the facility and making sure all employees know the location
 - conduct mock drills to ensure everyone knows and follows established safety protocols

- mock drills and interactive training sessions (such as Q&A discussions) can be effective ways to teach employees about what to do in an actual emergency and what their responsibilities might be
- post all safety signs in easily-visible locations
- regularly inspect all fire extinguishers
- ✓ train staff, including any new and/or temporary employees, of all emergency protocols
 - while OSHA doesn't require employers to maintain training records regarding the written Emergency Action Plan, it's a good idea to document all staff training and review sessions related to the safety plan
 - conduct periodic retraining, especially if the emergency protocols have changed or if staff duties and responsibilities have changed
- ✓ develop severe weather plans that can be implemented when needed
 - including a provision to maintain off-site storage or access to electronic data in the event of a flood or other disaster
- Be aware that additional regulatory requirements, such as zoning ordinances or local building codes, may be in effect.
 - ✓ Check with your local police or fire department for information or consult a qualified building inspector for more information.

Resources: OSHA [Evacuation Plans and Procedures eTool](#)
 OSHA [Minimum Requirements](#)
 OSHA [Develop & Implement an Emergency Action Plan \(EAP\)](#)
 OSHA [Evacuation Elements](#)
 OSHA [Fight or Flee?](#)
 OSHA [Shelter-in-Place](#)
 OSHA [Fire, Rescue, and Medical Services](#)
 OSHA [Reporting Emergencies](#)

Reproduction of this material by dentists and their staff is permitted, provided that any reproduction must include the ADA copyright notice. Any other use, duplication or distribution by any other party requires the prior written approval of the American Dental Association. **This material is for general reference purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Dentists should contact qualified legal counsel for legal advice, including advice pertaining to compliance with the regulation(s) discussed in the content of this resource.**

© 2017 American Dental Association. All Rights Reserved.