

Safety Matters

Provided by: California Restaurant Mutual Benefit Corporation

Handling Chemical Spills, Leaks and Explosions

Storing or handling chemicals in the workplace puts all employees at serious risk for injuries due to explosions. For this reason, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires worksites where hazardous chemicals are used to have an emergency action plan (EAP). OSHA takes this requirement seriously, as employee safety in the workplace is our top priority.

The plan describes the procedures to follow during an emergency, such as a chemical spill, leak or explosion, including:

- Who to notify
- Who is in charge and who else has responsibilities in responding to the incident
- Who is responsible for each task
- How to evacuate the site

OSHA also requires all employees to be trained on EAP procedures, so that everyone is prepared in the event of an emergency. Notify your supervisor if you have not yet had training on EAP procedures or if you would like a refresher.

Prevention

The first priority when working with chemicals is to try and prevent a spill, leak or explosion. You can contribute to that goal by:

- Knowing and understanding the chemicals you're working with, including

any hazards - refer to the appropriate Safety Data Sheet (SDS) or ask questions if you are unsure

- Following all safety precautions and protocols
- Helping to make sure all chemicals are properly labeled in their container

When an Incident Occurs

To determine if a chemical spill, leak or explosion is hazardous or requires special cleanup procedures:

- Identify the chemical(s) involved.
- Refer to the SDS for any chemical involved to find out how flammable and/or reactive it is, what protective equipment is needed and spill cleanup procedures.
- For chemicals resulting in a hazardous fire or explosion, refer to the SDS also for firefighting instructions.

Emergency Procedures

- In the event of a chemical spill, leak or explosion, be sure to:
- Immediately notify your supervisor.



- Notify other workers in the area.
- Activate emergency alarms.
- Call 911.
- Keep people out of the area.
- Leave the area if the spill cannot be readily contained, or if it presents an immediate danger to life or health.
- Follow the evacuation rules in the EAP.
- Evacuate upwind, not downwind.
- Leave cleanup to trained personnel, such as a Hazardous Materials team.

Do not:

- Try to rescue or help injured people unless you are sure you will be safe
- Try to clean up a spill yourself, except where permitted or required by site rules and the EAP

OSHA requires these safety measures, and so do we. It is our hope that an accident like this never happens, but all employees should be prepared in case it does. Make sure you learn these precautions and follow them if you ever must respond to a hazardous chemical spill, leak or explosion, to help keep yourself and your co-workers safe.