



What if *You* are the First to Respond?

An Installment of Suggestions for Workplace Preparedness

Although the fire department, the police department and the emergency medical services are called “first responders” they are not usually the first people to arrive at the scene of an emergency. Did you know that during emergencies, most people save themselves and other victims long before the “first responders” arrive? So, what if the first responder to an emergency is you? Do you know what to do? The following are suggested responses if you are the first person at the scene of an emergency.

Common Medical Emergencies

The most common causes of workplace injuries are slips and falls. If someone near you takes a tumble:

- Do not move the injured person unless they are at immediate risk of further injury. If the injured person is conscious, allow them to tell you how to help. If the injured person is unconscious, call 911 immediately.
- If the injured person is bleeding and you choose to touch them, put something impermeable between your skin and their blood. If you do not have plastic gloves, plastic page protectors will do.

For more information, consider taking a course in CPR and/or first aid. Your local Red Cross chapter offers these courses regularly. See <http://www.nyredcross.org/> for more information.

Less Common Fire Emergencies

Fires rarely happen in office buildings. When they do occur during the workday, they are typically extinguished quickly. If you discover a fire, please follow the instructions you have learned during building fire drills. Before taking any fire suppression action, please consider that any attempts to extinguish a fire using a fire extinguisher, or any other means, can delay your escape from the fire.

Very rare WMD Emergencies

How do you know if you have encountered a weapon of mass destruction (WMD)? The

signs will not always be obvious. WMDs include biological, nuclear, incendiary/explosive and chemical weapons. An explosion will precede most nuclear or radiological releases. Chemical attacks will result in immediate symptoms from victims, but biological weapons could take hours or days to make themselves evident. Here are some tips if you are suspicious of a WMD attack:

- If you encounter an unknown substance, do not touch it, smell it or taste it.
- If you see victims, but no apparent cause, it could be a chemical attack. Get away from the area.
- Be aware of the possibility of a secondary device. A secondary device is designed to detonate when the emergency responders arrive, or in a location where the victims of the first attack have fled for cover.
- Protect yourself first. You are useless to others if you are also incapacitated.
- In a nuclear or radiological emergency, use the distance, shielding and time response method. Get as far away from the incident as possible, shelter-in-place behind thick walls or underground and follow directions as to how long you must remain sheltered.

Useful information about WMDs is located at the Center for Disease Control Website, <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/index.asp>.

If you would like to get more involved in response efforts, consider joining or organizing a Community Emergency Response Team. More information is available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/oem>.

More information and links to many resources can be found at www.newmarkpm.net or by emailing Jessica Handy at Jhandy@newmarkkf.com.