



# FIRST AID IN THE WORKPLACE

Workplace accidents requiring emergency first aid don't happen every day, but when they do, quick and capable care is essential. Here are some tips for making sure your first-aid plan is up to par.

## CASE SCENARIOS

- A worker is hurt in an accident and blood is gushing from the wound.
- A worker chokes on a piece of food and can't breathe.
- Someone goes into cardiac arrest right at his workstation.

Would you be ready to act with speed and competence in a workplace medical emergency

You would if you were trained in first aid. Every work area and every work shift should have at least a few employees (the more, the better) who have received first-aid training and who can respond to workplace medical emergencies, such as:

- Bleeding
- Heart attack
- Broken bones
- Eye injuries
- Stopped breathing
- Heatstroke
- No pulse
- Chemical poisoning
- Choking
- Burns
- Shock



## CALL FOR HELP

The first priority in any serious workplace medical emergency is to call for help. If an accident results in injuries, someone should immediately call for an ambulance and stay on the line with the dispatcher.

Another employee should notify a supervisor. Someone should head for the main entrance to await the emergency response team and lead them to the victim or victims. Other employees can give first aid. If only one employee is on the scene of an accident, the first priority is always to call for emergency medical assistance and then apply first aid.

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#### ASSESS THE SCENE

Once help is on the way, first-aid responders must take a moment to assess the scene to make sure it's safe and to be certain they know what type of first aid is required. Before treating victims, first-aid responders should:

- Evaluate the scene for safety, number of injured, and nature of the event.
- Assess the toxic potential of the environment and any need for respiratory protection.
- Prioritize care when there are several injured.
- Assess each victim for responsiveness, airway blockage, breathing, and circulation, and check for medical alert tags.
- Perform a logical head-to-toe check for injuries.
- Reposition ill or injured workers if necessary to prevent further injury.

#### TREAT THE VICTIM(S)

When the situation has been evaluated, responders are ready to treat the victim or victims. Taking swift action for lifethreatening emergencies might require first-aid responders to:

- Perform rescue breathing.
- Treat airway obstructions.
- Perform CPR.
- Use an automated external defibrillator (AED).
- Control bleeding with direct pressure.
- Deal with poisoning.
- Recognize signs of shock, heart attacks, strokes, or other sudden potentially deadly illness.
- Continuously monitor victims for changes in condition.

#### FIRST-AID TRAINING: WHAT TO EMPHASIZE

To prepare first-aid responders to act quickly, confidently, and effectively, you need to provide proper training. Workplace first-aid training should emphasize a number of key points, including:

- The need for quick action.
- Treatment of common types of workplace injuries and illnesses.
- Development of hands-on skills through practice drills.
- Reference materials for use during and after training.

- Strategies for overcoming stress, fear, and panic, which can interfere with effective emergency action.
- The importance of universal precautions and required PPE (such as gloves and eye protection) to prevent exposure to bloodborne pathogens.
- Knowledge of hazardous chemicals in the workplace and first aid for inhalation, ingestion, and skin or eye contact.
- And because there might be long intervals between when first-aid responders learn and use first-aid skills, retraining at regular intervals is essential. Retraining for life-threatening emergencies should occur at least annually, and re-training for non-lifethreatening response should occur "periodically."

#### EXAMPLES

Seconds count in a medical emergency. When a worker has been injured, what happens while waiting for the ambulance to arrive could make the difference between life and death.

Case 1: Sam is experiencing shortness of breath; his skin is ashen; he's perspiring; and he feels severe pain down his left arm. What should his co-workers do?

- Call 911. Sam is probably having a heart attack.
- Help him to a comfortable sitting position and keep him from moving about.
- Loosen his clothing at the waist and neck.
- Give heart medication if called for, but don't give any stimulants.
- Begin CPR if his heart stops beating.

Case 2: Jenna is choking on something she just ate. What should her co-workers do?

- Stand behind her, and put arms around her waist.
- Place fist, thumb-side in, against her stomach between the navel and ribs, and grab the fist with the other hand.
- Keep pulling in and up sharply until object is dislodged.

Case 3: Mick has just been splashed in the eyes with a hazardous chemical. What should his co-workers do?

- Get him to an eyewash station immediately.
- Flush his eyes with water for at least 15 minutes.



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- Get him to a doctor immediately after administering first aid.

Case 4: Veronica's hand got caught in a conveyor. Her hand is mangled, and one of her fingers has been amputated. What should her coworkers do?

- Call 911.
- Put on latex gloves from first-aid kit.
- Apply pressure with a clean bandage from the first-aid kit to stop bleeding.
- Place her amputated finger in a plastic bag, inside another plastic bag that is filled with ice and send it to the hospital with her.
- Treat her for shock, if necessary, by laying her down and covering her with a jacket, sweater, or blanket to keep her warm until the ambulance arrives.

Case 5: Chris is in his 60s. While working, he develops a headache and starts to feel dizzy. He's experiencing vision problems, and his face and limbs down one side of his body feel weak. What should his co-workers do?

- Call 911. Lester may be having a stroke.
- Cover him with something warm like a jacket, sweater, or blanket.
- Offer no stimulants, food, or drink while waiting for the ambulance to arrive.



I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE A WASTE OF TIME  
BUT, I HAVE LEARNED SO MUCH HERE I WILL SEND  
MORE STAFF BACK NEXT WEEK...

CPR COURSE 2015

