

# Veterinary Insurance Program



## Veterinary Loss Prevention Program

## Emergency Preparedness: Safety Communications in the Veterinary Setting

Products and services are offered through Safehold Special Risk, Inc, dba Safehold Special Risk & Insurance Services, Inc. in California. Coverage is provided by unaffiliated insurance companies.

© 2022 Safehold Special Risk, Inc. All rights reserved

# Emergency Preparedness: Safety Communications in the Veterinary Setting

---

## Trainer's Overview

**To have your employees get the most out of their training sessions, it is suggested that:**

- **The training sessions should be conducted in a relatively quiet uninterrupted environment.**
- **The sessions should be held the same time and day of the month (i.e., first Tuesday at 12:30).**
- **Employee handouts should be given out along with pencils/pens.**
- **Review the trainers guide, employee handout and any references.**
- **Keep the sessions to a maximum of 20 minutes.**
- **Give personal examples of incidents or prevention techniques that worked for you.**
- **Ensure that all employees present sign the Safety Training Sign-in Sheet for documentation purposes.**
- **If some employees were not present, a second training session should be given.**



# Emergency Preparedness: Safety Communications in the Veterinary Setting

---

## Trainer's Overview

### What you need to know about Safety Communications in the veterinary office setting

Effective emergency communication is vital. Therefore the focus of this edition will be a discussion of what resources and actions can be effectively used to facilitate necessary communications before an incident occurs.

Minimizing the impact of incidents begins long before an event takes place. While recovery and resumption of normal business activities is critical, these tasks become increasingly more manageable with adequate prior preparation. One of the most crucial pieces to preparing for disasters or smaller incidents is communication throughout a clinic. This communication may be limited to employees or might be further expanded.

What happens to the office or clinic when the area in which it is located faces an incident (e.g., flooding, or wildfire)? Perhaps it is an incident isolated just to the office itself (e.g. a fire), or perhaps it is a more widespread regional event (e.g., an earthquake).

Employees are the most essential part of any business and it is imperative that managers provide their staff with the information they require to remain safe and eventually resume normal business activities.

### Who is at Risk?

Each clinic must evaluate their own situation, but all clinics should know the following:

- How my employees can be reached in case of emergency?
- What functions do individual staff members perform in case of emergency?
- Is staff prepared to act properly in case of emergency?
- What is the information dissemination process, and what method of communication will be most effective for any type of emergency?
- Do all employees know what to do and where to find information necessary to take action?

### Best Practice

A Best Practice for clinic management is to implement a written emergency action plan, establish a proper chain of command, establish emergency response teams, outline response activities, train employees on the written plan and their responsibilities.

### Emergency Action Plan

Firms with more than 10 employees must have a written emergency action plan; smaller firms may communicate their plans orally. In either case, plans should include:

- Chain of Command: The individual to whom all employees must report an incident and await instructions. This individual will direct all emergency activities including evacuation of personnel, notifying outside emergency services, directing the shutdown of all operations to secure such things as cash, medications, medical equipment, and supplies.
- Emergency Response Teams: A special team that responds to general and localized emergencies to facilitate evacuation, shut down of building services and utilities as needed, work with responding authorities (e.g., fire, police), protect and salvage company property and evaluate areas for safe reentry.
- Response Activities: Using a fire extinguisher, providing basic first aid, assisting with shutting down operations, knowing chemical spill control procedures, assisting with evacuations and accounting for personnel following an evacuation.
- Training Employees: Employees should be trained on the above items as well as their responsibilities and level of authority during an emergency. The training should be documented.
- In addition to the main emergency action plan, there should be a collection of concise plans for every anticipated emergency (e.g., earthquake, fire, flood, adverse weather event, chemical spill), which provides step by step procedures to follow.

In summary, emergency action plans should have at least the following elements: alarm systems, evacuation plan, procedures for shutting down and securing

# Emergency Preparedness: Safety Communications in the Veterinary Setting

## Trainer's Overview, continued

facilities, and procedures for notifying emergency response personnel. For more information and guidance, refer to the **Resources** section.

## Workplace Controls

Work practice controls are meant to reduce the likelihood of exposure through regular refresher training, reminding and/or reinforcing of policies and procedures. Controls include, but are not limited to:

- Developing and empowering a safety committee with specific goals of simplifying communication within the office.
- Training employees on the following procedures:
  - Responding to alarms, or threats;
  - The preferred method for reporting emergencies (i.e., chain of command);
  - The location of written programs and emergency posters and phone tree;
  - Emergency evacuation exit routes (primary and alternative);
  - Evacuation assembly location and roll call; and
  - Emergency response team responsibilities (e.g., use of fire extinguishers, medical/first aid, rescue, and facility shut down).
- Developing and posting a phone/e-mail tree and ensuring it is readily available and understood by all employees, so that in time of need it can be put in place quickly and effectively with the desired message to be spread through the staff.
- Ensuring all employees are aware of the 10-digit emergency contact numbers such as local Fire Department, Police, hospitals, utilities, etc. (Note: In times of emergencies 911 becomes overloaded.)
- Ensuring employees are instructed to "decline comment" to any media.
- Having a mutual assistance policy with other clinics in the area.
- Conducting drills routinely to practice actions and communications that would be made by all employees in case of emergency.
- Updating and revising your communication policy often so it will always be ready for action when the need arises.
- Reviewing the clinic's website during employee training sessions and ensuring employees know

where to get critical information, documentation, and emergency messages/updates such as:

- Instructions on reporting to the office or not.
- Information for the public when necessary.
- Information for customers on the alternative, partnering clinic to which they may take their pet until normal business operations resume.

## Questions for Discussion

Question: Why is a communication plan important?

Answer: A safety communication plan in place prior to an accident ensures that all employees know what to do, whom to contact, and where to look for important information.

Question: What are some key components to an effective safety communication plan?

Answer: Some of the most important factors in development of a safety communication plan are effective usage of the clinics' websites, a call tree for all employees and a readily accessible call list for local emergency responders.

Question: How can I effectively use my clinic website as a safety resource?

Answer: The clinic website can be used to store all safety committee documents to be used as reference in case of emergency, as well as disseminating information to employees, the public, and the media.

## Resources:

Additional information and guidance is available from the following websites:

CDC Emergency Response Resources:

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/emres/business.html>

Emergency Action Plans:

(Federal OSHA regulatory standards):

<https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.38>

(California OSHA regulatory standards):

<https://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/3220.html>

Emergency Telephone Numbers (poster):

[https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh\\_publications/s500pstr.pdf](https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications/s500pstr.pdf)

How to Plan for Workplace Emergencies and Evacuations (OSHA Guide 3088):

<https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/osh3088.pdf>

# Emergency Preparedness: Safety Communications in the Veterinary Setting

---

## Attendance record

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature:

Print name

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Products and services are offered through Safehold Special Risk, Inc, dba Safehold Special Risk & Insurance Services, Inc. in California. Coverage is provided by unaffiliated insurance companies.

# Emergency Preparedness: Safety Communications in the Veterinary Setting

## Employee Handout

### Overview

Our focus in this handout will be a discussion of what reasonable expectations all employees should have regarding necessary communications before an emergency, incident, or accident occurs, as well as during the following days and even weeks after the event has occurred.

When an emergency is occurring is not the best time to ask oneself the most important questions:

- What do I do?
- Where do I go?
- Am I expected to report to work?



Not knowing what to do will cause us to 'freeze' in place and not take any action, which will adversely affect your and your co-worker's health and safety.

Minimizing the impact of an incident begins long before an event takes place. Prior preparation is the key for everyone to be as ready as possible for an incident of any kind. One of the most crucial pieces of this type of preparation for disasters and even large and small accidents is communication throughout the office or clinic. All employees should understand and prepare to act on their responsibilities that have been predetermined to respond immediately to an incident.

Whether an incident is isolated to just the clinic itself, or is a more widespread regional event, employees should already have the information they need to remain calm, and keep themselves and others safe, evacuate quickly to the predetermined assembly point, and understand they are to wait there until roll call has been taken and senior management advises them it's

either clear to resume operations, or they're free to leave work until further notice.

### Questions

The following questions are a start to a create a better prepared workplace:

1. Do you know what do when an accident of any kind occurs?
2. To whom do you report an emergency?
3. Where is the posting that has emergency phone numbers including the Fire Department, Police, hospitals, utilities?
4. Where is the written emergency action plan located?
5. What are my responsibilities under the plan? What actions will be expected of me when I'm at work?
6. How do I evacuate this building and where is the assembly point?
7. How do I access information and resources on the company website?
8. Does the clinic have your current contact information including phone number, cell phone, e-mail address, and home address?
9. Have you participated in and provided feedback relating to evacuation drills and/or practice runs of emergency action plans?
10. Does the clinic have a "mutual aid" agreement with other clinics?

### Conclusion

Emergency preparedness and accident prevention is the responsibility of all employees, not just management. The most important factor in minimizing the impact of an incident is communication within clinic and its employees. The moments during and directly following an incident are often frenzied and disorganized. It is only through preparation and practice that some of this turbulent time can be properly managed. The communication plan within an organization is the key to empowering employees to assume their predetermined responsibilities, and provide a more safe, confident and effective emergency action plan.