Lesson 7: Exit routes, Emergency Action Plans & Fire Prevention

Exit Routes
An exit route includes all vertical and horizontal areas along the route and should be a continuous and unobstructed path of exit travel from any point within a workplace to a place of safety.

Finally, an opening into an exit must be protected by an approved self-closing fire door that remains closed or automatically closes in an emergency.

It is important to remember that exit routes must be maintained during construction, repairs or alterations.

You must be able to open exit doors from the inside at all times without keys, tools or special knowledge.

It is essential that the exit routes support the maximum permitted occupant load for each floor it serves. The capacity that the exit route can hold must not decrease in the direction of exit route travel to discharge.

Each exit must be clearly visible and marked with an “Exit” sign.

1910.38, Emergency Action Plans
The emergency action plan must be in writing, except for firms with 10 or fewer employees.
An emergency action plan must do the following:
- Describe actions that must be taken to ensure employee safety in emergencies
- Include floor plans or maps which show emergency escape routes
- Tell employees what actions to take in emergency situation
- Cover reasonably expected emergencies such as fires, explosions, toxic chemical releases, hurricanes, tornadoes, blizzards and floods.

An employer must have and maintain an employee alarm system with alarms that are distinctive and recognized by all employees as a signal to evacuate the work area or perform actions identified in your plan.
An evacuation plan must contain conditions under which an evacuation would be necessary, a clear chain of command, specific evacuation procedures, procedures for assisting people with disabilities or who do not speak English, a designation of any employees that will continue or shut down critical operations during an evacuation and a system for accounting for personnel following an evacuation.

**Fire Prevention Plans and Systems**

A fire prevention plan must be in writing, be kept in the workplace and be made available to employees for review. However, an employer with 10 or fewer employees may communicate the plan orally to employees.

An employer must inform employees upon initial assignment to a job of the fire hazards to which they are exposed. Where portable fire extinguishers are provided for employee use, the employer must mount, locate and identify them so workers can access them without subjecting themselves to possible injury.

The fire extinguisher picture-symbol labeling system now in use is designed to make the operation of fire extinguishers more effective and safe to use through the use of less confusing pictorial labels.

Employers must keep their fire extinguishers maintained in adequate condition. They must make sure the fire extinguisher is fully charged and in an operable condition. Also, fire extinguishers must be kept in their designated places at all times, except during use.