Chapter 6: Emergencies and the importance of emergency procedures

Emergencies

An emergency is a situation that is unexpected and could threaten safety or cause serious disruption. An emergency requires immediate attention.

Emergencies can include incidents, occurrences and accidents, for example:

- **an incident/occurrence** could include a fight, power cut or drug overdose
- **an emergency** could include health emergencies such as epileptic seizure, anaphylactic shock, heart attack etc.
- **an accident** could include someone falling down steps or slipping on a wet floor

Responses and reactions to emergencies

You need to be aware that not all people react in the same way during emergency situations. Some may become hysterical and run away, others may just freeze on the spot, not knowing what to do. Both reactions could cause their own problems to the security team.

Fight or flight

It is important that you understand what happens to yourself and others when you are confronted by either conflict or by frightening or threatening situations. Only then can you plan what is the best way to react yourself and how to treat others when conflict arises.

If someone you are dealing with becomes angry and starts to threaten you, then you will automatically start to use the emotional side of your brain more than the rational side. It is the natural human response to a threat or potential threat to our well-being and safety.

If, as humans, we did not get frightened in such situations, our brains and bodies might not be prepared to be able to react quickly enough or in the proper way if we did actually need to protect ourselves.

When you become frightened, your body automatically enters what is called **fight or flight** mode.

This is because of the basic natural animal instinct that we all have, which helps us to survive potentially dangerous situations. When in fight or flight mode, various different things will automatically happen to your body to try to make you better prepared to deal with the threat, both physically and mentally.

Your body releases the hormone adrenaline into your system to increase your physical ability to fight or run away. This adrenaline rush increases your heart rate, pumping extra blood and oxygen to the muscles you need to use. Your eyes will widen to take in as much of the situation as possible, although sometimes you will centre your attention directly onto the threat itself, causing what is often called 'tunnel vision'.

Your sense of hearing will intensify, again to try to allow you to take in as much information about the threat as possible.

Once the situation ends, whether that is by you having halted or fought off the threat, or whether you have been able to get away from it, then your brain and body begins to calm down again, in an attempt to get back to normal. Your body will slowly return to its natural relaxed state, and as you calm down, your brain will return to thinking with the rational side again.

If your brain and body do not return to their natural conditions as they should, then you could go into a state known as shock. This usually only happens after a particularly threatening or frightening situation, however.

When dealing with an emergency situation, as a security operative you need to be aware of taking control in crowds or with large numbers of people present during an incident. This is to try to avoid people from being crushed or injured during an evacuation or invacuation.

Companies will often have an escalation procedure for incidents and emergencies. You must understand how a graduated response can be applied in each situation. You will be required to record your involvement and may be asked to review and evaluate the responses during the incident.

We can place incidents generally into three camps:

EMERGENCIES

URGENT

and

NON-URGENT

Emergencies are life-threatening incidents requiring immediate attention and probable deployment of emergency services.

FIGHT or FLIGHT

Fight or flight prepares our brains and bodies to:



stand and physically FIGHT fight off an attack

or to



run away from the situation FLIGHT to keep ourselves safe



Making emergency calls

If you need to call for the emergency services, call

999.

This will put you through to the emergency services operator. The operator will ask you for the following information:

- which service you require (police, fire, ambulance)
- the telephone number you are calling from (in case you are cut off or for a call back)
- your exact location (address and postcode)
- type of incident
- number of casualties
- extent of injuries
- any other dangers or hazards

You need to remain calm while making the call and you need to provide as much information about the incident as you can, so that the emergency service requested can provide the best response.

Types of emergencies within the workplace

Examples of emergencies that you may become involved with as a security operative include:

- power system or equipment failures
- floods
- actual or threatened serious injuries
- serious illnesses
- bomb threats
- fires
- terror threats

Actions to be taken in an emergency

All incidents need to be dealt with immediately, very often with the emergency services being called to attend. You will need to follow your company or site guidelines on how to deal with them.

Fires, floods, power cuts, gas leaks and chemical spillages are normally dealt with by activating the alarm and then evacuating the site. The emergency services should be called once the evacuation has been started.



In a situation where a gas leak is suspected, once the evacuation has been started you should try to ensure that no one smokes or switches on any lights or electrical equipment in the area, as even a small spark could cause an explosion.

Where possible, doors and windows should be opened to try to disperse the gas. If possible, the gas supply should be turned off at the mains.

Road traffic accidents are normally dealt with by the police. An ambulance may also be required if serious injuries are sustained.

Incidents of violence may be dealt with by removing the instigators from the site, by calling the police or by making arrests if serious injuries are sustained. First aid may also be required. Serious crimes that occur on the site will normally be dealt with by calling the police. Containing any suspects and crime scene preservation must also be considered. First-aid incidents, where staff or visitors/customers are injured or become ill, should be dealt with by a trained first-aider. In serious incidents, an ambulance should be called.

All bomb threats and suspect packages must be dealt with seriously, usually by raising the alarm, evacuating staff and visitors/customers via the quickest and safest exit and then by calling the police.

It is important that all security operatives know and follow correct procedures for any of these emergencies. You need to ensure your own safety as well as the safety of others in dangerous situations. You may need to call and assist any of the emergency services.

Most importantly, members of the public and other members of staff will look to you as a security operative for help during emergencies. You will need to take control of situations professionally and calmly and follow the correct procedures so that other people do what is safest and best for themselves until the situation is resolved.

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Personal injury responses

First aid is defined as the initial or immediate assistance given to someone who has been injured or taken ill, before the arrival of an ambulance, a doctor or other qualified person.

Employers are required by law to provide adequate personnel, training, equipment and facilities to any staff or visitors/ customers should they be injured or taken ill on the site.

As a security operative, you must know your site's policy for providing first aid, what you are expected to do in a medical emergency and who the designated qualified first aiders are on the site. You may even be required to undergo first aid training yourself.

If you are trained to do so, you may be required to administer first aid in times of emergency. If you are first-aid trained, remember the following:

- ensure your own safety first
- assess the situation
- control the situation
- diagnose the injury/illness
- save life
- send for appropriate medical assistance
- keep people safe
- provide privacy



In a first-aid incident if you are not trained, you may need to:

- call the first-aider if you are not qualified (if you are, you may still need support)
- know when to call an ambulance; you or the first-aider may be able to deal with a minor injury, but it is very important that you know when to call an ambulance - always take guidance from a qualified first-aider
- ensure that onlookers are kept to a minimum but also monitor anyone who has remained for signs of shock
- provide as much of a physical block as you can, to protect the dignity of the casualty and prevent onlooking
- direct the ambulance to the casualty (if you are not the first-aider)



As mentioned previously, it is important to record all details relating to injuries sustained on the site, whether they are sustained through accidents or criminal actions.

The information contained in the accident book can often help employers to identify accident trends and improve the general health and safety of the site. These records may also be required for insurance and/or investigative purposes.

The main aims of first aid are to:

- preserve life
- prevent the condition from worsening
- promote recovery
- obtain qualified assistance

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Evacuation and invacuation principles

When evacuating or invacuating a building, it is important that you are aware of the organisation's policies and procedures and specific requirements, these must always be followed to ensure customers and staff members are kept as safe as possible.

Evacuation – this is the controlled process of emptying an area or premises of people.

Evacuation can be to an adjoining area within a building or outside depending on the severity of the incident. Evacuation could be required in the event of a flood, fire or terror threat, for example.

There may be situations when invacuation needs to be completed.

Invacuation - this is the controlled process of getting people into safe premises due to an incident which could cause harm to people who are outside. For example, if a person with a firearm started to shoot people in the street, you would encourage everyone into the building and lock the doors for safety.

Different sites or venues may have different evacuation and invacuation procedures, as a security operative, you will need to make yourself aware of the policies for carrying out these procedures at each venue you work at.



Evacuation

Invacuation