

Press Release

Department of Labor and Employment
Bureau of Working Conditions
19 July 2017

Disaster Preparedness: Planning Ahead for the Big One

BE PREPARED is the scout motto everyone is familiar with. This means that one must be ready to do the right thing at the right moment especially during disaster.

Disasters, emergencies, calamities take many varied forms and may occur gradually or suddenly, in small, medium, large or initially imperceptible magnitudes. The Philippines is prone to many natural and man-made disasters. Natural disaster vulnerability of the country is a known fact. In fact, everybody is going gaga over the big one.

Earthquakes strike without warning. In most cases the shock occurs and is ended in seconds, which precludes any personal protective action during the tremor. As the country observes Disaster Month, the Bureau of Working Conditions tries to put systems in place to reduce the vulnerability and build a disaster resilient workplace as it issues the following procedure during earthquake.

The following are the suggested immediate response measures for all personnel:

1. On detection of shock, remain in place. Remain calm, try to calm and reassure others.
2. If indoors, watch for falling plaster, light fixtures and other objects. Stay away from windows and mirrors. If in danger, get under a table, desk, or gurney, in a corner away from windows, or strong doorway. Usually it is best not to run outdoors. (Whenever possible you should duck, cover and hold)
3. After the initial shock has ended and a reasonable interval has passed with no future shock, the safety officers must survey their immediate surroundings to determine injuries and damage.
4. Do not attempt to move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of further injury.
5. Safety Officers are responsible for employees and clients in their vicinity. If possible, they must reassure and calm those who are hysterical and panic stricken.
6. If there are obvious injuries from falling objects, shattered glasses or personnel trapped under debris, assistance must be requested. First-aid must be performed within one's capability.
7. Check for fire or fire hazards from broken electrical lines or short circuits. Follow the fire response procedures if ever it will occur.

8. If the Office has not been made unsafe by the earthquake, it is advisable to encourage employees to stay inside until the conditions of the roadways are determined.
9. If evacuation is deemed advisable, determine the condition of exit areas and avoid those that are obstructed or otherwise.
10. Immediately sound the fire alarm by activating the nearest pull station in the corridor. This will commence the evacuation.
11. The Safety Officer will lead the evacuation of DOLE employees, after a quick survey of the exits. Walk quickly to the exits in an orderly manner.
12. Do not use elevators during fire and earthquake. Take any person with disabilities or injuries (if they can walk) to the fire safe stairwell. Designate rescuers will ensure that there are no employees will be left behind. Personnel may communicate with each other through whistle.
13. Injured persons must be brought immediately to the makeshift first aid station for first aid treatment. Priorities will be given to more serious cases. A designated vehicle will be used to bring injured personnel to a hospital for further treatment.
14. Appropriate assembly area must be pre-determined and is a function of the evacuation team. The head of Office shall have the responsibility of determining missing employees and informing the rescue team of the names of the missing persons.
15. Be prepared for additional aftershocks. Although most of these are smaller than the main shock, some may be large enough to cause additional damage.
16. Check to see that the sewage lines are intact before permitting flushing of toilets.

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