



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Monday, March 17, 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR: Heads Of Executive Departments And Agencies

FROM: Kay Coles James
Director

Subject: Security of the Federal Workplaces

I have heard from several agencies requesting specific suggestions that departments or agencies can take to improve the security of the Federal workplace. As you know, the Office of Personnel Management recently released two emergency guides for Federal employees and managers (opm.gov/emergency) that provide general guidance on preventing and mitigating the damage of a potential accidental or intentional release of chemical, biological or radiological material. While these guides have relied on the best advice of over 23 subject matter experts representing 16 departments or agencies Governmentwide, it is not possible for these guides to provide specific information on every potential contingency plan that each agency should have in place. As a department or agency head, you are ultimately responsible for the health and safety of your workforce and all appropriate contingency plans.

Within the guides are several references to basic actions that every Federal agency should be doing right now - at a minimum- to educate, and protect the safety of our teammates. The items listed in the three broad categories below are useful as a baseline for agencies as they evaluate whether they have fulfilled the minimum obligations to secure the safety of Federal employees.

- I. Agency Planning
 - A. Update Occupant emergency plans;
 - B. Conduct threat assessments. The Federal Protective Service conducts recurring threat assessments for GSA-controlled property. Appropriate contact numbers for FPS Regional Offices can be found at <http://www.gsa.gov>. Federal agencies in buildings not managed by GSA should contact the FBI or local police for emergency preparedness and/or threat assessments.
 - C. Practice shelter-in-place/evacuation/fire drills regularly;
 - D. Ensure protection for special needs employees;
 1. Survey employee population for employees who may have special physical needs,
 2. Implement "buddy system" for special needs employees, (usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa-154.pdf)
 - E. Distribute emergency guides.
- II. Employee Communication

- A. Conduct "town-hall" meetings with employees to discuss risks and communicate contingency plans, and other building specific evacuation and shelter-in-place plans;
 - B. Actively solicit employee comments/suggestions for improvements via email, homepages, suggestion boxes, etc.;
 - C. Update employees on plans/changes via email and other means of communication;
 - D. Maintain updated emergency contact information for senior executives.
 - E. Meet with union officials to seek assistance with communication of emergency plans;
 - F. Remind employees experiencing stress-related concerns that Employee Assistance Programs are available.
- III. Building Operations
- A. Test fire/safety public address systems;
 - B. Check air handler cutoffs and emergency access;
 - C. Ensure signage for evacuation/egress routes is clearly visible;
 - D. Ensure your safety/security personnel maintain continual communications via walkie-talkie, cell phone, pager, etc.

In these times, the concern of Federal employees is understandable. Often, this concern can be addressed by informing our workforce of the contingency plans in place for their safety and protection. Please be aware that, from the calls we are receiving, this communication may not be happening consistently throughout Government.

Please review both emergency guides, in conjunction with your current plans and procedures, so that you are familiar with the responsibilities of your agency and that you are able to answer any questions your employees may have. OPM has sample protocols available for evacuation and egress procedures. If your staff has further questions, they should not hesitate to contact Clarence Crawford, our Associate Director for Management and Chief Financial Officer. Mr. Crawford can be reached at 202-606-1918, email "cccrawfo@opm.gov".

Truly, these are weighty and difficult times for the federal workforce. To ensure this important guidance is being received and understood across Government please report back to me by April 1, 2003 on your progress in the completion of these minimum safety requirements.

cc: Human Resources Management Council