



DISASTER RECOVERY – BEFORE WORK RESUMES

GUIDANCE FOR WORKPLACE BUILDING OWNERS/EMPLOYERS

This guidance is to assist owners/employers with their decision making before they resume work in their workplaces.

It applies only to disasters resulting in significant structural damage, and after the local authority has approved your buildings' structural safety and you have obtained permission to enter.

Having gained structural clearance, it is important to realise that there may still be a number of potential hazards inside the premises. Prior to commencing normal operations in the workplace you will need to take all practicable steps to ensure a safe workplace for employees and others as they resume work.

Below are some points to consider as you prepare to resume work.

■ Cleaning up

If clean up work is required it needs to be effectively managed to ensure the safety of those involved.

Hazards associated with the different types of clean up roles need to be identified, a task analysis developed and control measures put in place. All people carrying out work need to be adequately trained and supervised and provided with suitable resources such as protective clothing and equipment.

As this work goes on, you and your employees will often be in the best position to gauge the risks.

There may be situations where work will need to be deferred while hazards are assessed. Encourage your employees to take this approach and to be cautious.

■ Hazard identification and assessment

It is important that prior to commencing normal work operations that you take time to carry out a thorough hazard identification and management assessment of the workplace. This should include –

- Looking at existing hazards and ensuring previous control measures are still adequate.
- Identifying any new hazards or potential hazards that the disaster may have caused and discussing the control measures that may be required.
- Being vigilant. Some of the hazards or risks may not be clearly visible. An example of this could be an overhead travelling or gantry crane in a factory where the crane visually looks good but the structure supporting the beam may have been weakened. This would require checking by a certified inspection body.

You and your employees will generally have a greater knowledge of the risks or hazards that may have resulted to the work environment from the disaster and all should be involved in the process. However, outside expertise may be required for particular hazards, especially if it is of a structural or supporting nature or involves hazardous substances.

■ Consider the impacts on your employees

Be mindful of the psychological impact on employees returning to work. You will need to be sensitive to reluctance of some people to re-enter the workplace.

Remember too that that further emergencies (for example, aftershocks following an earthquake) may still occur, and ensure that your evacuation plan is adequate and ensures a safe exit from the building should the need arise.



■ Things to look out for

All workplaces that have been affected by the disaster will need to be assessed. This includes farms, forestry operations, shops, warehouses, gyms, factories, offices, entertainment venues etc.

There is not a single checklist of hazards that will work for all workplaces. Instead each business will have its own hazards and the effects of the disaster will differ from one workplace to another, and depend on the nature of the disaster. However, as a starting point, below are some of the hazards that may have resulted:

- General
- Electricity
- Gas
- Water
- Access and egress
- Chemicals – leaking containers, compatibility, cleaning up spills
- Stability of fixtures
- Shelving
- Mezzanine floors
- Plant or equipment that was bolted down
- Storage of goods
- Structural soundness of any lifting equipment or supporting mechanism for any lifting equipment
- Construction
- Propping of precast panels
- Integrity of excavations
- Integrity of scaffolds
- Propped framework
- Partially completed structures
- Temporary power supplies
- Anchor points used for harnesses
- Access platforms
- Forestry
- Unstable root base
- Hung-up spars
- Ruptured diesel tanks
- Crevasses
- Unstable rocks/banks/land features
- Farms
- Unstable silos
- Unstable tanks
- Structural damage to out buildings
- Unstable haystacks

