

WEEKLY SAFETY TIP – 4/12/10 – WHAT’S THE NUMBER FOR 9-1-1?

No, the title is not a misprint. Yes, it is a trick question. What number do you call when you need emergency services? The answer is “it depends.” There are a number of factors that you should consider. Where are you – at home, at the office, or at a client’s work site? What type of communication are you using – a cell phone, a “land-line” phone, or a radio? And at some sites, why you are requesting emergency assistance might also indicate what number you should call – is there a medical emergency, a chemical release, or is some type of crime in progress?

Because emergencies demand immediate assistance, knowing what number to call and how to get the help you need is very important. Here’s a quick list of numbers that you might need to keep handy.

The 7-digit number for the local emergency dispatch center: This number, whether it is for your assigned work site, or for home, should be programmed into your cell phone. While not consistent in all 50 states, many 9-1-1 calls are processed through highway patrol dispatch centers, as cell phones were originally thought to be for mobile (meaning in a vehicle) use. Some of us now use our cell phone in place of a regular phone at work and home. But in an emergency, you don’t want to wait while the highway patrol answers your call, then has to transfer it to the number you could have programmed into your speed dial. This number can be found on the local police, sheriff or fire department website, or just call them. Often, they are happy to give you that number. (If you work in the San Francisco Bay area, we have many of the emergency phone numbers in a free downloadable pdf on our website at: Industry News: http://www.scm-safety.com/industry_news.html)

9-9-1-1: Some businesses do not have direct dial outside lines. If you are working at a facility or site it is your responsibility to ensure you know what to do in an emergency. 29 CFR 1910.38 (2) states in part: “*Employees must be sure that they know what is expected of them in all such emergency possibilities which have been planned in order to provide assurance of their safety from fire or other emergency.*” (see link: http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=10114) Find out what the company’s procedures are for contacting emergency assistance.

2222 (or 333, etc.): Some organizations have their own site Emergency Response Teams. To summon them, they may have a special code you can call from a facility telephone. Or you are supposed to call the main control room for them to sound an alarm. Learn what the response number is – and what that site ERT is capable of doing. They might be for medical or chemical responses only, but not for fires. Or they might not be trained for confined space rescue. Knowing who to call, and how to call them for which emergencies saves valuable time when you need someone to get there ASAP.

9-1-1: There are times when this is what you need to call. For example, at the SCM main office, if any of us require emergency assistance, please call 9-1-1 right away. And note that we always write the numbers the way we want you to remember it – “*Nine One One*”. While

you may have heard it before, it bears repeating that small children might look for an eleven button on a phone if they have been taught to call "*Nine Eleven*". Always say and teach others the 9-1-1 sequence.