



by *Tineyi Chinenyenga*

Mock Drills

The world is becoming increasingly vulnerable to disasters from earthquake, floods diseases, famines to name a few and no one knows when and where they strike. The same way accidents happen and threatens our workplaces, it happens when you are not aware, but when it strikes it poses danger to life, business, and property. Countries and companies now have programs and systems set to reduce the adverse effects of accidents and disasters.


‘Yes,’ it is important to have all these programs and systems in place to prevent and counter the adverse effect of disasters and accidents, but now what is more important is to put in practice what the system and program entail to do before accident or disaster strikes.

When we talk of accidents, workplace accident management is best viewed as life skill and has maximum impact when taught through hands-on learning and experimentation, rather than teaching it solely as an academic subject. Therefore, it includes carrying out accident preparedness programs including mock drills, first aid, search and rescue, and crowd management training. In a workplace setup, mock drills are effective way to educate workforce on how to respond when accident strikes.

Mock drills are referred to as operation base exercise in which a facility actively walks through the step by step of an emergency preparedness plan. Once a drill exercise is complete, it is imperative to review any mistakes and find ways to make them perfect and fit to the emergency preparedness plan. Therefore, ideally a mock drills relevant program would not only teach knowledge of the hazards themselves, but also involve workforce in a more hands-on practical application in identifying hazards and risks and how to deal with them. This could include visits to and by the organisation dealing with various aspects of hazards and accident management.

The actions taken by an organisation in response to unexpected events that are adversely affecting production, workforce/resources and threaten the continuation of operation in the organisation accident management includes the development of accident recovery plans, for minimising the risk of accidents and for handling them when they do occur, and the implementation of such plans.

Some scholars say: ‘practice makes it permanent’ practicing emergency preparedness plan by running mock drill takes time/resources in planning, creating, and reflecting on how the real scenario can happen and how to respond to it. However, the cost of this practices differs from workplace to another depending on how complex a workplace environment, nature of emergency preparedness plan and number of workforces. But remember, once the drill is done it changes attitude and behaviour of workforce/employees in perceiving and responding to emergency situations.



When performing mock drill for the first time in a workplace, it is important to start simple and grow complex, by starting simple you will be considering couple 'wins' during the process and try encouraging workforce when appropriate responses are noticed. Once a sense of readiness in response to emergency is gained by the employees, move on to complex scenarios at a workplace.

Mock drills can be announced or unannounced. Unannounced drills require greater planning and cooperation. Use good judgment when considering which to do. The number of workforces may not determine if the drill must be done announced or not. The most important thing is how the workforce understands specific emergency response plan. More so, drills can be either narrow or broad in scope. Narrow may be primarily focus on department in a workplace, for instance, the security department only responding to a particular stimulated scenario. Broad, may involve the whole organisation responding to a single or several emergency situations, this may include visitors and stakeholders i.e., town/city fire department, local police.

For effective assessment of drills, drills can be recorded on video for review. Video removes the fog of interpretation and individual perceptions when evaluating the events and responses surrounding the drill. Notes are good. Video can be even better. Drills should be planned with specific outcomes determined before the drill starts. Always know "why" you are doing the drill and what specific parts of the system you are testing, making it easier to evaluate if you were successful or not.

Drills should always be followed up with a review meeting, and both the drill and the meeting should be well-documented for the purposes of system continuous improvement through policy rewriting and staff training.

In conclusion, it is not too late for your organisation to do a mock drill, as it is said that accidents do not happen, but they are caused. Planning, effective implementation strategies, development of right attitude for safety, coordination and co-operation with agencies working in different areas is important for ensuring safety in workplaces. Mock drills are participative, interactive, and applied in a way that it works through the learners subjective experience and it allows contact with the environment, and exposure to processes that are highly variable and uncertain, involves the whole-person; where learning takes place on the affective and behavioural dimensions as well as on the cognitive dimension. The experience given to the workforce need to be structured to some degree; relevant learning objectives need to be specified and the conduct of the experience needs to be monitored. And the process feedback needs to be provided to the workforce by the safety management personnel/educators to compliment the outcome feedback received by the employees. When implemented properly, mock drills can be much more powerful than the passive toolbox talks/classroom training as it promotes both individual and social transformation.