



## 027: Exit Strategies

### *General*

You want to have a second way out from wherever you are.

If such a way does not exist or is not readily apparent, you may be able to create such a way.

Know the locations of all emergency exits in your area and near it, not just the closest one.

Specific locations require specific strategies. Here are some.

### *Underground or in vessels*

Look for a second manhole or pit access way, and know the path to it in case of loss of power.

Look for a removable panel or other opening that is not normally used but can be converted into an exit with some quick work.

Wear extraction devices in case you cannot exit under your own power. These devices allow a third party to pull you out, even if you are unconscious.

Plan for survival or rescue in the case of a wall collapse. Let's say you are working in a pit and it's not shored up sufficiently. If it collapses on you, the location of the exit is irrelevant. What matters is how fast your coworkers can dig you out before you run out of air. If you have any warning at all that a wall is caving in, start moving away from it. Turn your back to it, raise your hands to your cup your face, and keep your elbows in at your sides. This maximizes the amount of air you have, and helps you keep your head up.

If you have been trapped, try to reach your radio or cell phone. You won't know up from down, but you can give a message that you are alive. Try to stay as calm as possible and keep talking to a minimum. If you stay still, you will be less likely to further bury yourself. If you see light or hear sound, yell toward it and try to reach for it. Otherwise, stay still to conserve oxygen.

### *Overhead, platforms, mezzanines*

If a mezzanine has only one ladder or stairway going up to it, create an emergency exit of your own. You can do this, for example, by securing a rope ladder or other such device at a location not near the normal access ladder.

If you are going into a ceiling area or attic, place a ladder at more than one opening. If there is only one opening, place a ladder at a known point where you can remove tiles or break through the ceiling by kicking out the drywall.

If you are working in cable tray such that your body is actually in the tray and you are crawling around it, you will find it exceedingly difficult to back up to your exit in case of fire. Position a second or third ladder at a known point where you can move forward to make a fast exit.

If you are working from a bucket, how would you get down if the operator below had a heart attack? Plan for this. Most buckets and other aerial lifts have occupant controls. If your equipment does not, you should have a backup operator either present or just a short call away. If you depend on a call, ensure you have a call-in

### *Discussion leader duties for this session:*

Take a tour of the job site and look for places where a pre-planned alternate exit strategy would be important. Discuss these places with your crew.

### *What this Safety Talk covers:*

How to avoid being trapped when your primary exit is blocked or destroyed, or when you are incapable of using an exit because of an injury or other cause.

### *Discussion notes :*

