

b. Essential Functions and Key Positions

Use Worksheet # 25 to complete this task.

There are several methods that an organization should use to identify key positions.

One method for determining key positions is to question management and staff. Managers generally have a strong grasp of their areas of responsibility. Ask them questions such as, *"What positions in your areas of responsibility are so important that if they suddenly became vacant, your part of the organization would face major problems in fulfilling your responsibilities?"* Another approach would be to ask staff, *"In an emergency, would it be necessary for you to be present at the facility to perform your duties?"* As with all delegation-of-authority questions, the focus should be on the positions—not the incumbents.

A second method is to identify key positions by historical evidence. When the organization is missing a person who is in a key position, it is obvious and possibly devastating to performing essential functions. Decisions cannot be made, needs cannot be satisfied, orders cannot be shipped, etc. If there is an absence in a key position, essential functions are not being fully met. By examining organization in this manner, key positions are recognized by the consequences of a vacancy or anticipated vacancy.

Third, an organization that, in the past, has experienced a crisis that resulted in unexpected departures by key position incumbents can use evidence of this event to determine which are key positions. Contact those supervisors who were present during the vacancy to find out which departures posed the greatest problems and why they posed such problems.

Once key positions have been identified, an organization needs to maintain information about these positions. This documentation should be easily accessible, and it should be captured in training materials. For example,

- (1) Who occupies those key positions now? What are their qualifications/backgrounds?
- (2) What are the work requirements for key positions?
- (3) Where are the key positions located in the organization?

c. Determine Orders of Succession for All Key Positions

After determining the authority that should be delegated; studying the organization chart; examining the consequences resulting from a current or past vacancy; questioning current and former employees; and examining historical evidence; identify key positions for each essential function in Worksheet #25.