

Respond Ready: Expanding Workplace First Aid to Include Opioid Overdose Preparedness



Executive Summary

The rise in workplace opioid overdoses has created a new dimension of occupational risk. Between 2011 and 2018, overdose deaths at work increased by more than 600%, now accounting for nearly 1 in 10 fatalities on the job.

Employers are increasingly expected to prepare for medical emergencies that extend beyond traditional injury response. *ANSI/ISEA Z308.1-2026 Standard for Workplace First Aid Kits and Supplies* introduces an important advancement: recognition of naloxone as a supplemental emergency supply for first aid programs.

This white paper explains how employers can implement opioid overdose preparedness protocols within existing safety and health management systems. It also provides context for the inclusion of naloxone within the International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA) standard, the training that supports its use, and how organizations can integrate overdose response into broader emergency action planning.

619% Increase in workplace overdose deaths.
— [NIOSH/CDC Data, 2011–2018](#)

1 in 10 Workplace fatalities is now due to overdose.
— [NIOSH/CDC Data, 2011–2018](#)

The Changing Nature of Workplace Medical Emergencies

Opioid-related deaths are no longer confined to community settings. The rise in workplace overdoses reflects both the prevalence of opioid use in the broader population and the complex challenges employers face in promoting safety, health, and recovery.

[Resources from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\)](#) advise that workplace preparedness now require policies and procedures that address overdose response. This includes training employees to recognize the signs of opioid impairment and overdose, understand emergency response steps, and access to naloxone when needed [in alignment with Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's \(SAMHSA\) recommendations](#).

The opioid crisis has made overdose response a core element of emergency readiness. Employers that proactively integrate this capacity demonstrate not only compliance but also a strong commitment to worker well-being.



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safetyequipment.org/naloxone

Introducing Naloxone as a Supplemental Workplace Supply

The ANSI/ISEA Z308.1-2026 standard recognizes that first aid preparedness must evolve alongside emerging health and safety risks. Appendix B of the standard introduces naloxone as a recommended supplemental item for emergency use in workplaces where opioid exposure is possible.

Key guidance includes:

- [According to the CDC](#), Naloxone is an United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved, over-the-counter medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.
- Employers are encouraged to make naloxone available in the workplace for emergency use.
- Naloxone kits should be stored in plain view, clearly labeled, and located near other first aid and emergency equipment.
- [The CDC suggests](#) each kit should contain at least two nasal spray doses.
- [Data from the CDC shows](#) Naloxone is safe to use even when opioids are not present, eliminating concerns about inadvertent administration.

This guidance builds on ISEA's mission to advance safety worldwide by promoting clear, practical standards that reflect real workplace risks and equip responders with the tools they need to act quickly and confidently.



What supplies do you need for First Aid in the work place?

Building a Comprehensive Overdose Preparedness Program

Incorporating naloxone into workplace safety programs requires planning, training, and communication. Employers can build effective opioid response capability using the following framework, drawn from ANSI/ISEA Z308.1-2026 and leading public health resources such as NIOSH, SAMHSA, and the National Safety Council (NSC).

1. Establish a Written Response Plan

- Integrate overdose response into the organization's emergency action plan.
- Define roles, response steps, communication protocols, and reporting procedures.
- Ensure procedures align with local and state laws regarding naloxone administration and Good Samaritan protections.

2. Conduct Overdose Response Training

Training should cover:

- Recognition of opioid overdose symptoms such as unresponsiveness, shallow breathing, and pinpoint pupils.
- The steps to call emergency services and administer naloxone.
- Post-incident actions including Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and responder debriefing.

Employers may use existing resources such as [SAMHSA's Overdose Prevention and Response Toolkit](#) and [NSC's First Aid and Naloxone eLearning modules](#) to ensure consistency and competency.

3. Integrate Naloxone into First Aid Infrastructure

- Store naloxone kits in visible, accessible locations alongside Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs), trauma kits, and first aid cabinets.
- Include them in regular first aid kit inspections as recommended by the ISEA standard.
- Ensure signage and communication inform employees where kits are located and how to access them during an emergency.

4. Support Recovery and Post-Event Care

- After an overdose incident, provide support for both the affected employee and responders.
- Include counseling, debriefing, and referral to treatment or employee assistance resources.
- Recovery-oriented policies reduce stigma and reinforce a supportive safety culture.

Employer Benefits and Broader Impact

Findings from NSC show integrating naloxone and overdose training strengthens overall emergency readiness.

This study also showed employers benefit from:

- Reduced response time during life-threatening emergencies
- Lower liability through proactive risk management
- Improved worker trust and confidence in workplace safety programs
- Alignment with evolving national safety and health standards

By recognizing naloxone as part of a comprehensive safety framework, employers can help shape a new era of preparedness and safety in American workplaces.

Conclusion

Overdose emergencies represent a growing workplace safety challenge that demands both awareness and action. The inclusion of naloxone in the ANSI/ISEA Z308.1-2026 standard acknowledges the reality of today's workforce and provides clear guidance for employers seeking to protect their employees.

Through education, preparedness, and adoption of this new guidance, employers can ensure that first aid programs are not only compliant with best practices but capable of saving lives when every second counts.

