

Nightclub Fire in Brazil Shows Importance of Emergency Preparedness



Investigations of safety incidents are designed to identify the cause(s) so that steps can be taken to ensure that similar incidents don't happen again. And you can learn from not only the incidents in your own workplace but also those that happen elsewhere.

But sadly not everyone learns these lessons.

Case in point'a nightclub fire early on Jan. 27 killed around 230 people in Santa Maria, Brazil. This tragedy has some eerie similarities to one that claimed 100 lives at The Station nightclub in West Warwick, RI, nearly a decade ago during a performance by the band Great White.

In the Kiss nightclub fire in Santa Maria, pyrotechnics ignited flammable sound insulation on the ceiling, creating a deadly inferno, which is exactly what happened in The Station fire.

One witness to the Brazilian fire said bouncers initially closed the club's only exit door to stop people from fleeing, reportedly over concerns that they hadn't yet paid their bills.

Some witnesses also said a fire extinguisher didn't work. (You should regularly inspect fire extinguishers to ensure they work properly and [train workers on how to properly use them.](#))

In addition, many of the dead were found in the club's bathrooms because patrons thought the doors were exits. (That's why you should ensure your emergency exits are clearly marked and aren't blocked or locked.)

Poor fire and emergency preparedness isn't only an issue in nightclubs.

The day before the Brazil tragedy, a fire broke out in a garment factory in Bangladesh. Investigators are looking into claims that the factory's sole emergency exit was locked. Seven female workers died in the blaze.

This factory fire occurred just two months after a similar fire in another Bangladesh factory killed 112 workers. (Here are some [lessons](#) from this and another garment factory fire in Germany.)

How many more of these tragedies have to happen before employers get the message that proper emergency preparedness is critical?