

## Insight: Emergency Disaster Preparedness Planning

Emergency planning is a critical aspect of any organization. Most companies will face limited emergencies due to fire, severe weather, or natural disaster. Some organizations may face civil emergencies, such as those in downtown DC during large-scale demonstrations. Your business plan needs to include actions to preserve the organization and meet business needs during a disruption in ordinary working conditions. This should forecast what you will do if you do not have access to facilities, equipment, systems, assets, and data.

One critical element is human resource management in such cases. This checklist is designed to assist you in preparing for such emergencies. Employee involvement in the emergency plan development will help ensure your plan is comprehensive, realistic and useful.

Simple issues often create the biggest problems in an emergency. One company evacuated three floors following a basement fire only to discover that many of the employees had left without car keys, wallets, identification, and such. They had to get home locally or by plane - and it was another three days before the building reopened due to contamination concerns. That experience led to adding reminders about carrying critical things when you moved around the building as a part of employee orientation and emergency plan communications process.

All questions may not apply to your organization. Review this in light of your size and organizational complexity.

### Organizational Issues

- Does the organization have a disaster preparedness policy/plan?
  - Are there effective procedures in place to support it?
  - Have these been tested? Have all responsible parties been trained regularly?
  - How often is the plan reviewed?
  - Has it been reviewed with local emergency agencies for suggestions?
  - Is one person designated to maintain and manage this plan?
  - If you have classified materials or other data which require security procedures to protect, have these been included in the plan?
- Does the organization have a disaster recovery plan?
  - Is it integrated with local emergency agencies' services or plans?
  - Have all responsible parties been trained regularly?
  - Is there a specific human resource management section?
  - Is one person designated to maintain and manage this plan?
- Do all potential users have copies of the disaster preparedness and disaster recovery plans?
  - Are there copies maintained off-site?
  - Annual communications or training on these plans?
  - Is there a summary available for new hires and in employee guides?
- Do you have emergency supplies available in each office?
  - Have people been trained in their location and use?
  - Do you have first aid kits?
  - Are flashlights checked regularly for good batteries?
  - Are smoke detectors' alarms checked regularly?
  - Are fire extinguishers scheduled for and regularly maintained?
  - Who is designated to maintain these supplies and checks?
- Are there emergency evacuation procedures prominently posted in each location?
  - Do you have a way to announce an emergency evacuation to all staff immediately?
  - Do you have a designated point for evacuees to go to and be counted?
  - Designated persons to oversee this?

- Ways for people who are not in the office/site at the time to check in?
- Do you have information identifying people with special mobility needs and their locations with a plan for egress in emergencies?
- What rules exist about executives/key personnel traveling on same plane, etc?
  - If travel includes high-risk areas of the world, do you have procedures to change travel patterns and to conceal the identity and position of such personnel when they travel?
- What travel/reimbursement practices or other services do you have in place to assist people who may be temporarily stranded in other locations?
- Do you have effective succession planning in place for at least three levels down in the organization and for each major function or division?
- Do you have complete, current records of all employees with their locations and emergency contact information available at all times?
  - Do you have an off-site back-up?
  - Do you have a way to contact traveling employees at all times?
  - Do you have some form of telephone chain of notification established?
  - Do employees know who to contact during emergencies and how?
- Do you have a back-up data off-site service that has all your personnel and payroll information as well as other critical company data?
  - Do you do regular, automatic back-ups and transmit them?
- Do you have alternatives identified to maintain critical functions through alternate work locations or practices?
- Do you have special physical, facility, or personnel security measures planned for emergency operations?
  - If so, do all personnel involved understand them?
  - Can you actually and realistically implement these measures?
- Have you identified ways your organization could assist others in a disaster and have you contacted your local emergency operations to advise them of this?

#### **Human Resource Management: Specific Issues**

- Do you have a communications plan in place to notify remote staff and offices of emergency closures or disasters?
  - Do you have an alternative system if you are not able to use your company telecommunications services?
- Do you have a plan to provide critical information to all employees about their own situation and any organization-related changes which they need to know?
  - If you have plans to use a company Intranet, do you have the ability to access and update it remotely? Does it have an alternate server/service?
- If a military call-up of the guard or reserves follows the emergency/disaster, do you have procedures to place people on military leave of absence?
  - Do you know who among your key employees are in such positions and do you have back-up for them?
  - Are you aware of your legal requirements for reinstating such employees following their military duty period?
  - Have you assessed whether you will provide any additional support, services, or communications for such employees or for their dependents?
- If you have employees who are disaster specialists (volunteer firefighters, EMTs, reserve police, etc.) or who have other special duties during emergencies for government or non-profit agencies, do you have plans to deal with their absence for periods of more than 1-2 days?
  - Do you know who among your key employees are in such positions and do you have back-up for them?
  - Have you assessed whether you will provide any additional support, services, or communications for such employees or for their dependents?
- Do you have periodic employee safety training, such as: first aid, CPR, fire drills?
- Do you have first aid supplies and emergency medical assistance contact information readily available?
- Is there adequate training for the use/safeguarding of any hazardous equipment or materials?
- Do you have information necessary and a process to help with car-pooling, van-pools and other

- transportation alternatives? Tele-commuting options identified?
- Are there alternative people designated at each location to make emergency-related decisions in the absence of the top local manager or chain of command?
  - Do you have an employee communications resources plan in place to help people cope with their fears and distress after an emergency/disaster?
    - Can your EAP provide specialized disaster-related counseling?
  - What will you do if employees refuse to work in certain locations or to travel?
    - How many alternatives or how much leeway will you provide?
    - For what time period?
  - Do you have plans to assist or communicate with families of any missing, injured or dead employees?

#### **Civil Disturbance/Terrorism**

- Have you trained employees and supervisors in harassment issues and do you have special communications to reinforce this if an ethnic, religious or similar group's members become a target following a civil disturbance or a terrorist event?