

Disaster Recovery Planning

The Key to a Smooth Recovery Following a Disaster

In preparing for disaster recovery, most organizations follow variants of the basic steps listed below:

- Provide top-management guidelines,
- Identify serious risks,
- Prioritize the operations to be maintained and how to maintain them,
- Assign the disaster team,
- Take a complete inventory,
- Document the plan,
- Train employees,
- Test the plan and review with all employees.



As we have worked with organizations from retailers to banks to dairies, we have found that even following the basic steps, there are *small but crucial* points which are often overlooked, and simply *add insult to injury* when disaster occurs.

We provide a list of them here in the hope that it may help to lessen the disaster's impact:

- Do you have an alternate person with full authority for disaster recovery, in the event that the usual person in charge is not available?
- Do the Fire and Police departments servicing each of your locations have the phone number of both your person in charge and your alternate?
- Do you keep your backups where you can always get to them (not in a timed vault, etc.)?
- Have you tested that you can actually read and restore your computer and PC backup files?
- Do your alarms work without power (do they have battery back-up)?
- Are your safes fireproof or only "tool-resistant"?
- Do you have a binder off-site with a copy of every form you use, and the phone number of where you get them?
- Do you have the after-hours contact numbers for your insurance agent?
- Is your payroll function cross-trained — often for reasons of privacy it is not.
- Are your personnel records safe from fire — typically they are among the files which are not.
- Are your telephone and electrical service rooms protected from falling water — most are not, and represent a major cause of disaster downtime.
- Does someone have a list of all employees' voice-mail passwords in order to retrieve messages when an employee is suddenly ill or incapacitated.
- Do each of your locations have emergency cabinets, containing at least: candles, matches, flashlights with extra batteries, a radio with extra batteries, and a first-aid kit?
- Do all of your locations have at least one exit which can be used without a key? In some industries, up to 30% of sites literally "lock in" their employees after public hours are over.

Preparing the Disaster Recovery/ Business Continuation Plan

Remember, a disaster plan is never a fixed finished document — it evolves and gets better as time goes by. Therefore, it doesn't have to be perfect the first time you do it — the important thing is to get started on it!

- Be systematic in your plan — don't try to outguess nature and plan for a flood, a hurricane, a fire, etc. Instead, look at the common elements in any disaster:
 - loss of information,
 - loss of access to information and facilities,
 - loss of people.
- Make a matrix, with these three as the columns, and each of your activities as a row. (Beyond the obvious, your activities include things like "accounts receivable," "payroll," "real estate management," etc., depending on your situation.) Then figure out how you would respond to loss of information, access, and/or personnel for each function.
- Appoint a second in command. If the person normally in charge is injured in the disaster or not available, the second in command should be named in the plan, and delegated full authority in this situation. If you can't name someone, you have already pinpointed one of your greatest vulnerabilities!
- List individual responsibilities ahead of time, and assign specific people to each task. Again, beyond the obvious, this includes tasks such as notifying your suppliers where to deliver, calling your most important customers to tell them what has happened, calling your Board members, etc.
- Protect critical paper records. Even in a fully automated organization, there can be vulnerable records — such as "pending" contracts, advertising, research, loan applications, etc. — which only exist on paper.
- Set clear priorities among your activities. After a disaster, you will not return everything to normal at the same time. Decide beforehand the longest amount of time you are willing to be "dead in the water" for each of your activities.
- Have a backup connection to your main computer. Make sure that your main computer (either at your service bureau, your main office, or your hot site) can "dial out" in the event that your leased-lines are lost, or in the event that you must relocate to a different site.
- Make sure that employees can exit without a key. This may sound obvious, but in many organizations, once the doors are locked at the end of the day to keep the customers out, employees staying late to process work are locked in.
- Keep copies of all of your forms off site. This includes extra checks if needed so that you can buy the emergency supplies you need.
- Keep a copy of your disaster plan at home. Make sure it includes the home phone numbers of the service people you rely on: your insurance agent, plumber, electrician, etc.



Disaster Recovery Plan Worksheet



Emergency Contact Information

24 hour fire/water emergency service provider: Stanley Steemer Phone: 1-800-STEEMER

Local Fire Department _____ Phone: _____

Local Police Department _____ Phone: _____

Fire protection service company _____ Phone: _____

Account # _____ Contact: _____

Security System provider: _____ Phone: _____

Account # _____ Contact: _____

Local Water Department: _____ Phone: _____

Account # _____ Contact: _____

Preferred Plumbing Contractor: _____ Phone: _____

Preferred Electrical Contractor: _____ Phone: _____

Preferred HVAC Contractor: _____ Phone: _____

Power Company: _____ Phone: _____

Account # _____ Contact: _____

Natural Gas Provider: _____ Phone: _____

Account # _____ Contact: _____

Property Owner/Management Co.: _____

Contact: _____ Day Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Insurance Provider _____ Phone: _____

Agent: _____ Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Policy #: _____ Deductible Amount: _____

Preferred Roofing Contractor: _____ Phone: _____

Phone Service Provider: _____ Phone: _____

Account # _____ Contact: _____

Computer/Network Provider: _____ Phone: _____

Account # _____ Contact: _____

Disaster Recovery Plan Worksheet

Top Management Guidelines

Owner, President or Designated Individual with the authority to make procedural and monetary decisions on-the-spot in emergency situations _____
Daytime Phone: _____ After Hours Phone: _____

Back up decision maker with the same authority in the event the original individual is unavailable or incapacitated: _____ Phone: _____

Please list all applicable disaster recovery team leaders:

- DR Management Team Leader: _____
- DR Computer Team Leader: _____
- DR Logistics Team Leader: _____
- DR Administrative Support Team Leader: _____
- DR Communications Team Leader: _____
- DR Damage Assessment Team Leader: _____
- DR Customer Relations Team Leader: _____

Loss of Information

Computer/Network Vendor: _____ Phone: _____

Data Storage Vendor: _____ Phone: _____
Contact Person: _____ Acct. #/access code: _____

Do you have backup data files for your employee and payroll records? _____
If yes, are they stored off site? _____ If so, at what location? _____
Data storage company? _____ Phone: _____

Do you have backups for forms used to complete daily tasks stored at a remote location? _____
If yes, at what location or company are they stored? _____
Phone: _____ Contact Person: _____

Do you have an individual or an outside resource with the information and knowledge to complete all payroll tasks in the event your current individual becomes incapacitated? _____
If so, who? _____ Phone: _____

Do you have a list of all employee user names and/or pass codes to company voice mail and/or email to afford your company the ability to retrieve messages and service your customers in the event an employee becomes incapacitated or remote access is necessary? _____
If so, what location or company is the information stored? _____
Phone: _____ User name/No. _____ Pass Code: _____

Disaster Recovery Plan Worksheet

Loss of Access

Management Team Responsibilities

- Periodically meet with team leaders and establish priorities for recovery plan implementation.
- Ensure recovery plan guidelines are followed throughout the recovery process.
- Dedicate someone to implement a training program so all employees understand the policies and procedures of the plan.
- Immediately inform property owner or property management company of the situation and current status.
- Inform all applicable vendors and agencies to avoid unnecessary traffic around the property.

Logistics Team Responsibilities

- Prioritize operations starting with the activities you can live without the least amount of time.
- Arrange and schedule vendors per recovery plan guidelines to carry out the necessary tasks for mobilization of personnel and equipment to an alternate facility listed in the disaster recovery plan.
- Communicate with fellow team leaders so the task of one team does not impeded the progress of another.

Communications Team Responsibilities

- Establish phone services at the alternate facility as quickly as possible.
- Assign personnel to contact customers and vendors to inform them of the current situation and make arrangements for alternate pick up and delivery locations and/or dates.
- Inform local fire and police departments of the current situation and ensure they have a current phone number to reach you.
- Inform local radio and/or television stations of the situation so they may inform the general public.
- Establish a secure line of communication with all other team leaders and top management.

Do you have access to alternate facilities with adequate space and amenities to conduct business temporarily following a disaster that leaves your current facilities uninhabitable? _____