



Business Continuity

What you don't know can kill your business

Consider this; according to the Florida State Emergency Response Team (SERT) almost 40% of small businesses that close due to a disaster event NEVER re-open. What would you do if the building where your business is located was damaged or destroyed in a disaster? Where would you go to continue providing services to your customers? Would you have the correct resources? It's more than just technology. You'll need the 'tools' that make your business work, whether it's key personnel, products, equipment or supplies. A disaster plan that identifies your most important resources will help ensure that your business is prepared to survive during unexpected and difficult times!

Business Continuity is a process that will help you prepare for disasters and ensure that you stay in business after a disaster. We always tell our business continuity clients that they must "PLAN to stay in business".

"Private-sector preparedness is not a luxury; it is a cost of doing business in the post-9/11 world. It is ignored at a tremendous potential cost in lives, money, and national security." — *9/11 Commission Final Report, Chapter 12*

Why Plan for a Disaster?

The number of declared disasters has more than doubled in the last 20 years. Small to medium size businesses are most vulnerable to the long term affects of a disaster. Small businesses do not have the resources that major companies have to respond to and recover from disasters. Yet small businesses represent 99.7% of all employers in the US and account for almost 75% of new jobs added to our economy. Businesses can be hurt indirectly when a disaster strikes customers, suppliers and distributors. The impact of the disaster can be felt far from the epicenter.

In our role as professional emergency management consultants, we see time and time again how decimated areas experience pain in trying to recover. When local businesses cease to function, recovery takes longer and becomes more painful. The jobs and wages created by local small businesses are the lifeblood of the recovery process.

There is a lot of emphasis in the Business Continuity world about worst-case scenarios. We all see in the media the impact of earthquakes, tornados, floods and hurricanes. But small business must plan for and prepare for small disasters as well. The most common form of disaster in the US is a single structure fire. Though contained, this can wipe an unprepared small business out as thoroughly as a Category 5 Hurricane. In large-scale disasters there is often a large amount of public and private support from FEMA, Red Cross and dozens of other agencies. For small disasters, a business owner may easily be on their own. As I write this article, we are watching the Swine Flu move to a pandemic stage. Is YOUR business prepared?

Benefits of Planning for a Disaster

Preparedness enhances recovery from: business disruption, financial losses, loss of market share, damages to capital assets, equipment or inventory. Being prepared provides a higher level of security and wellbeing for you, your family, and employees. It also generates credibility with your customers, vendors, supply chain and the local community and creates financial strength. Consider the peace of mind and reliability we feel since Publix Supermarkets (not a small business) installed generators in most of their stores to ensure that food will be available after a disaster event.