

Emergency Preparedness Checklist for Small Businesses

Developing an emergency preparedness plan is one of the most important strategic decisions you will make as a small business owner. Consider how a natural, human-caused or public health disaster could affect your employees, customers and workplace. Would business operations continue? Preparing your small business doesn't have to be time consuming or expensive. Ask yourself the three questions below and use this checklist to help you prepare your business to stay in business.

1. How vulnerable would your business be if a disaster or other emergency were to occur?

- Know your region and the types of disaster most likely to have an impact on your business.**
 - Find out what emergencies have occurred in the past and what impact these had on other businesses in your area.
 - Consider your facility's physical capacity to resist damage and proximity to flood plains, seismic faults, dams, hazardous materials, nuclear power plants and other hazards.
 - Consult with your insurance agent and learn what coverage is available and what precautions to take for disasters that may impact your business. Remember, many general policies do not cover earthquake and flood damage.

- Assess the capacity of your employees to prepare for and respond to an emergency.**
 - Are 10- 15 percent of your employees trained in basic first-aid and CPR techniques? Do all employees know how to identify individuals who are trained?
 - Are employee roles clearly defined in the event of a disaster or emergency?

- Identify external emergency response resources that will provide assistance during a disaster or other emergency.** Who will you contact in an emergency and what will they be able to provide?
 - Local and state police.
 - Fire department and emergency medical services organizations.
 - Local government officials, emergency management office.
 - Local American Red Cross chapter.
 - National Weather Service.
 - Telephone, water, gas and electric companies.
 - Neighboring businesses.

2. What is your plan to protect the business and its employees before, during and after an emergency?

- Identify a First Aid team.** Approximately 10-15 percent of your workforce should be trained in first aid and CPR so that they can assist in times of disaster or emergency until help arrives.

- Obtain necessary safety equipment.** Budget for and purchase any safety equipment, first-aid kits, Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and shelter-in-place supplies that may be needed. Make sure employees know how to use and access these supplies.

- **Write a plan for responding to emergencies.** Your plan should include:
 - A system for warning employees about emergencies and communicating with employees and local emergency management officials during a disaster or emergency.
 - Considerations for the special needs of employees with disabilities and medical conditions.
 - Evacuation routes from your facility and an established location where employees should gather.
 - Provisions and a location for employees to shelter-in-place.

- **Develop a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).** This plan will help keep your business operating as it responds and recovers from the effects of a disaster or emergency situation. Here's how to start developing a COOP:
 - Establish procedures for COOP activation.
 - Identify essential business functions and staff to carry out these functions.
 - Establish procedures with suppliers, vendors and other businesses critical to daily operations.
 - Create a plan for conducting business if the facility is not accessible and set up electronic back up systems for vital business files.
 - Identify records and documents that must be readily accessible to perform essential functions and decide where these can be stored safely and retrieved quickly.

3. What can we do to integrate emergency preparedness procedures into our every day business operations?

- **Educate Employees.** Consider partnering with community organizations to help create comprehensive preparedness training. All employees should know:
 - Their role during a disaster and the roles and responsibilities of key personnel at your facility.
 - Warning and communication procedures.
 - Evacuation and shelter-in-place procedures.

- **Practice Your Plan.** Practice makes perfect. Conduct regular evacuation, COOP activation and shelter-in-place drills.
 - Use the drills to assess the readiness of your employees and your facility.
 - Involve both personnel and community responders in the evaluation process and use lessons learned to improve procedures and increase training as needed.

- **Encourage personal preparedness among employees.** Your employees will be better able to help your business respond and recover from an emergency if they know how to prepare their homes and families.
 - Offer first aid, CPR, AED and preparedness training
 - Encourage your employees and their families to:
Get a Kit, Make a Plan, Be Informed. A free online education module is available to help them at www.redcross.org/BeRedCrossReady.
 - Encourage employees to identify alternative routes for going to and from your facility.
 - Remind employees to always keep their emergency contact information current.

- **Help your community get prepared.** Work with local community groups and government officials to ensure that your community is prepared for disasters and other emergencies.
 - Host blood drives.
 - Work with your local Red Cross chapter to train community disaster education volunteers to conduct preparedness presentations.
 - Contribute supplies and/or services to emergency efforts.
 - Adopt a local school or school district and support their emergency preparedness programs.