



By Tasha Phelps

Emergency Preparedness is Essential to Building Business Continuity

Businesses have never been resistant to catastrophic events, but it wasn't until the last decade that the global economy has been forced to take notice of their long-term effects. Let's first define an "EVENT".... Events could be natural disasters, terroristic activities, health & chemical hazards, technological glitches, and for some businesses, something as unpredictable as the loss of key personnel.

No matter what the "event" is, the activities that a business would conduct – to sufficiently be prepared – are the same. Collecting information on the business in its current status is quite critical because it paints a "where we are now" picture. Some key questions that should be asked:

Who should be given decision-making power in time of crisis?

Of course it makes sense to consider executive management, at times it makes sense to consider the technology team, and for even others pulling in a third party may be of benefit. In any case, an organization fully needs to consider how this "power" could potentially be used beyond the time of crisis.

What parts of the organization are defined as "critical?"

For every business or organization this will be different. Most, however, will need to maintain access to quickly recover information on 1) their people, 2) their money, and 3) the data on their clients. An emergency plan should consider how to easily track and gain access to this information.

Where should the business consider (safely) storing its data?

Options for data storage can be 1 of 2 things: 1) off site, or 2) digitally in a remote location. Due to the evolution of technology, many businesses have found tools that leverage a combination of both an offsite and remote storage solution. Check with an IT professional for conclusive information about options for comprehensive data storage.

When should an emergency preparedness / business continuity plan implemented?

NOW!

Why is this activity essential to business growth?

Believe it or not, clients and customers feel good about doing business with a company that takes charge of its business continuity strategy. Moreso, banks appreciate doing business with companies that illustrate their commitment to business planning. Ultimately, having a continuity plan is a win-win-win!

How does management in a business get the people engaged and committed to the program?

It is human nature to want to take care of "home" first. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a perfect example of how human nature is consistent in a given circumstance. By first addressing the safety needs of the staff, they are likely to build another level of trust with management.

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Since the turn of the century, managers have been tediously documenting changes in the way information is collected, stored and shared. The catastrophic events that have occurred globally in the last decade definitely prove that NOW is the time to get ready for any kind of an emergency.

America as a nation has certainly experienced significant events that have instigated the development of stronger emergency preparedness planning, but **Indiana** in it of itself, has also learned to BE READY. Significant events over the past 3 years alone, have opened eyes for HOOSIERS:

June 2008 – Tornadoes Ravage Indianapolis and devastate habitats for dozens of east-side residents
(www.chicagotribune.com)

April 2008 – Indianapolis Residents Awakened to an Earthquake
(www.wishtv.com)

April 2006 – Regions Bank Building Sustains Heavy Damage in Tornadic storms
(www.insideindianabusiness.com)

November 2005 – Tornadoes in Evansville kill 22
(www.cnn.com)

So what should be gleaned from these instances? Where does a business go to ask questions or get additional help?

FEMA – the Federal Emergency Management Agency – says that the, “the time to prepare is real.” (www.fema.gov). They are centrally responsible for responding to national disasters and for helping state and local governments prepare for emergencies. They also state that given any kind of catastrophic event, a family should be prepared with its own emergency supplies for at least 72 hours. They’ve taken on the challenge of compiling information into materials that should help businesses stay on top of issues and concerns for being appropriately prepared. Some of the topics include:

- **Basic Preparedness**
- **Natural Hazards**
- **Technological Hazards**
- **Terrorism**
- **Recovering from Disaster**

To contact the FEMA office and get copies of any of these documents:

FEMA Distribution Center
1-800-480-2520
or
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
P.O. Box 2012
Jessup, MD 20794-2012





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The mindset of “it’ll never happen to me” must be erased. This is no longer optional because, in all reality, we just don’t know.

Businesses in the Hoosier state have quite an opportunity to stay on the cutting edge not only of technology, but also of preparedness. The Indiana State Department of Health is quite active on the health side of preparedness, and continually watches for threats that would negatively affect our economy. In the same light, the Indiana State Department of Homeland Security is very active with businesses and community-related initiatives that drive and stimulate economic productivity within the state.

Hoosiers seem to “get it.” And THAT, is half the battle! To build a strong plan for (any size) business, visit the Indiana Department of Homeland Security at www.in.gov/dhs for additional information and tools on how to do what is right for you and your business.

THEN, be sure to share what you learned with others so that our great state stays economically stable in the event there is an unforeseen emergency / *event* that needs to be managed. One last component to complete the process, and that is to DOCUMENT it. Keeping track of the outcomes will likely prove to be invaluable as the business continues to grow.