

do **1** thing/BUSINESS

SMALL STEPS TOWARD PREPARING YOUR BUSINESS FOR EMERGENCIES

Step 5: Vital Resources



THE GOAL: Make sure that vital resources are available, even when you can't get back to your site.

Records, systems and equipment are vital to the operation of your business. Could you continue to operate if you lost your customer or sales records? What about inventory or equipment? Identifying and protecting those resources ahead of time can save valuable time and money after a disaster, when replacements may be hard to find, if available at all.

Small businesses are more likely to fail after a disaster if they have lost significant assets. When deciding whether or not to reopen after a disaster, consider the condition of your:

- Facility And Building Systems
- Inventory
- Equipment/Processes
- Employees
- Institutional Memory
- Business Records

▶▶▶ CHOOSE ONE OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH TO PREPARE YOUR BUSINESS FOR A POTENTIAL EMERGENCY:

- Identify what records, systems, and equipment are necessary to continue essential functions in your business.**
- Back up vital records and equipment off-site.**
- Make a Go Kit for vital resources in case you have to evacuate your building.**

☐ Identify what records, systems, and equipment are necessary to continue essential functions in your business.

VITAL RESOURCES ARE THINGS YOU NEED IN ORDER FOR YOUR BUSINESS TO FUNCTION.

Identify specific vital records, databases/systems and equipment. Then look for ways they could be vulnerable to damage or loss.

How are records stored? Are they on digital media or in hard copy form? What equipment or systems do you use for daily operations or production? For payroll and administration? Are servers onsite or backed up elsewhere?

Some vulnerabilities to consider are fire and water damage, power failure, cyber attacks, vandalism or theft, and deterioration over time.

▶▶ Short-term Impacts:

- What records do you need to access in order to operate?
- What records do you need to maintain for legal or financial reasons?
- How up to date the records need to be?
- Do you have an inventory list of what you own?
- Do you need to maintain employee records?
- That equipment do you need to operate that you won't be able to easily obtain in a disaster?

Focus on the minimum number of records that you will need to operate—those that are vital to operating during the emergency or that are difficult or hard to replace. The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration estimates that no more than 7% of most records kept are essential. The number is probably between 3 and 5%.

(<http://www.archives.gov/northeast/vital-records-management.pdf>)

Back up vital records and equipment off-site.

- **Document:** The make and model of critical equipment and whether alternatives are available. Include a list of suppliers who have the equipment, with contact information. Create a quick reference guide with information about the equipment, what steps need to be taken to move it, if appropriate. If a limited number of people know how to operate the system or equipment, consider affixing procedures for use to the equipment itself. Make sure at least two staff members know where critical equipment is located.
 - **Look:** At your vital records and decide how to best protect them. Are records routinely backed up? If so, to where? What form is the record in (paper, digital, microfilm, etc.)?
 - **Choose:** Which systems to back up or recover vital records, identify alternatives or duplicates for vital equipment, identify what form the record is in (paper, digital, microfilm) and where it is stored. Also identify where and how the record is backed up. If it is backed up to a server, where is the server located? Consider a place that is practical and safe, if the building is evacuated. Back up your computer records daily and store them offsite overnight. For vital records, keep customer lists, accounts receivable/payable records, and supplier records backed up and offsite. Have multiple lists of important contacts in different locations. Keep insurance policies in a secure location, and have copies in other locations. Have a list of the locations of important business information and make copies for future reference.
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Finding the capital to replace critical assets and reopen can be difficult and risky if done haphazardly, especially if the business was not insured properly.

Make a Go Kit for vital resources in case you have to evacuate your building.

Go kits are made to assure that your employees will be safe and have what they need in case of an emergency or evacuation order.

»» A “Go Kit” Should Include:

- Backup of critical files on a thumb drive or other media
 - Quick reference card with instructions for shutting down systems before evacuation, if necessary
 - Extra equipment or a quick reference card with a list of equipment to be evacuated
 - Staff contact list
 - Flashlights and extra batteries
 - First aid kits
 - Whistle
 - Dust or filter masks
 - Moist towelettes or hand sanitizer
 - Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
 - Battery powered radio with extra batteries
 - NOAA Emergency Alert Radio with extra batteries
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Think about anything else you may need when relocating your critical operations. Consider what could be pre-positioned in your alternate facility.

YOUR GO KIT WILL NEED TO BE UPDATED PERIODICALLY. MAKE IT PART OF YOUR ANNUAL INVENTORY, OR ANOTHER PROCESS THAT YOU DO REGULARLY.

Information in this factsheet was adapted from: Surviving Extreme Events: A Guide to Help Small Businesses and Not-for-Profit Organizations Prepare for and Recover from Extreme Events by Daniel J. Alesch and James N. Holly. Available through the Public Entity Risk Institute at <http://www.riskinstitute.org>.

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