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SMALL STEPS TOWARD PREPARING YOUR BUSINESS FOR EMERGENCIES

Step 6: Key Personnel



THE GOAL: Identify your key personnel and make sure that at least one other person could step in and do their job in the event that they are not able to make it in.

Whether you are a business with only a few employees or many employees, human capital is the heart of your business. Identifying the critical functions that your staff performs, and making sure that someone is available to do it, is a key part of surviving a disaster.

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

- Identify personnel who perform essential functions in your business.**
- Create a succession plan.**
- Cross-train employees in critical operation skills in case a key employee is unable to come to work**

Terminology: Words like “critical” and “essential” are used a lot when developing disaster plans. Identifying employees who perform essential tasks is important, but it can make other employees uncomfortable. Most people don’t want to say that their job functions are non-essential. To avoid this, consider using other terms, such as “COOP” (continuity of operations) functions or “Non-COOP” functions when determining essential and non-essential job tasks and employees.

Identify personnel who perform essential job functions in your business.

Your staff is a vital resource in your business. Their skill and knowledge is critical to your organization's success. In a disaster, some employees may not be able to come to work. It is important to know ahead of time what tasks must be completed in order for your business to continue in a disaster.

If you created a list of vital business functions in Month 2 (Essential Business Functions), use it now to identify the staff members that you need to complete those functions. They are your key personnel.

A list of essential employees (key personnel) should be included in your emergency plan. Have up to date contact information for them, including alternate phone numbers if possible.

Identify someone else within your organization that may be able to perform their essential job functions if they are unavailable in a time of an emergency.

Create a succession plan.

A succession plan is an important step to defining how you can implement your emergency plan effectively. Your succession plan should allow you to respond quickly and confidently in case leadership or vital staff members are unavailable to perform their essential functions during a disaster. It is important that your organizations leadership, including your management team or Board of Directors, be aware of your succession plan.

Identify what authorities are held by your key personnel. Can they sign checks, hire and fire employees, or enter into contracts? If so, make sure that the person who will replace them in the succession plan is able and prepared to take on those authorities.

Identify your line of succession by utilizing your organization and include this in your formal emergency response plan.

Cross-train employees in critical operation skills in case a key employee is unable to work.

There are often employees in an organization that are experts in specific areas. They may be the only ones who know how to complete specific tasks, or who have information about a specific part of your business. If those employees are not available after a disaster, it could impact your ability to do business effectively. Cross-training employees can avoid that situation. Make cross training part of your regular training program.

In your emergency plan, clearly identify who may need to be trained to perform some of the following essential functions, such as, contract, check and purchase order authorization, human resource functions, etc.

Clearly establish rules, procedures, and limitations for when authority is delegated and who can implement these responsibilities. Make sure to incorporate laws and regulations, union contracts, define where authorities come from, and what are the specific guidelines imposed. Build and incorporate all of this into the training and include this information in your formal emergency response plan.

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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