

Disaster Planning for Your Office

Emergencies happen every day. Whether natural or man-made, emergencies can wreak havoc on those involved, resulting in loss of lives and property. However, not all emergencies become disasters—the difference is in how effectively and efficiently people respond. Having a well developed and frequently practiced plan can minimize the impact of an emergency.



When creating a disaster plan, begin by reviewing the following:

- **Risks:** Consider geography, climate, location or unpopular organizational activities that could make your facility a target. Try to determine all vulnerabilities and consequences.
- **Inventory and Insurance:** Complete a thorough inventory of property and employees, and store a duplicate copy off-site. Review your insurance policy coverage. Prioritize which items should be salvaged first.
- **Preventative Measures:** Once the risks have been identified, determine what precautions can be taken. Can alarm systems be upgraded? Is important data archived regularly?
- **Other Parties:** If you are in a building that houses several businesses, determine roles and communication methods.
- **Resources:** These can range from police, fire, government and ambulance services to maintenance, insurance and utility companies. Review resources locally, regionally and nationally.

At minimum, your plan should include the following:

- › An introduction including potential events and a chain of command.
- › Actions to take if advance warnings have occurred.
- › Emergency procedures for each event, including what to do during and after.
- › Steps that will be taken to restore normalcy.
- › An appendix of all necessary documents, such as floor plans and contact information.

Once the plan is developed, communicate it to all occupants, schedule practice drills, and create a procedure to ensure that new employees are informed. During emergencies, communications often become limited. If possible, monitor TV/radio reports for official instructions. Authorities may direct you to evacuate, shelter-in-place or seek medical treatment and your plan should include instructions for each. Encourage all occupants to keep a personal supply of essential medications on hand. Also, always stock of the following:

- › Water (1 gallon per person, per day)
- › Food (3-day supply, non perishable)
- › Radio (battery-powered)
- › Flashlight and extra batteries
- › First Aid kit
- › Whistle (to signal for help)
- › Dust or filter masks
- › Moist towelettes (for sanitation)
- › Wrench or pliers (to turn off utilities)
- › Can opener
- › Plastic sheeting and duct tape (to seal a room)
- › Garbage bags

For more information on disaster planning...

American Red Cross:

www.redcross.org/services/disaster



Local Response | National Support