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Weathering the Storm

A Business Leader's
Guide to Disaster
Preparedness



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What is Disaster Preparedness?

For any business to survive a disaster, having a comprehensive disaster preparedness program in place before calamity strikes is key.

Disaster preparedness refers to a set of proactive measures that predict, prevent, and mitigate the impact of a disaster. It should be viewed as an action plan that prepares your business to withstand potential disasters or emergencies that may affect your business operations.

It involves identifying potential risks, vulnerabilities and threats to help businesses like yours effectively prevent, mitigate and respond to unexpected hazards.

A disaster preparedness plan enhances your readiness against disasters, both man-made and natural. It helps you minimize financial losses and ensures business continuity by implementing preparedness plans and strategies.

As a business owner, you want to secure your business against various threats affecting normal business operations. A disaster preparedness plan gives you the edge you need to protect your business and stay ahead of competitors.

Why Would You Need a Disaster Preparedness Program?

A disaster can quickly spiral into a business-ending event if you don't have a disaster preparedness program.

For business owners like you, a disaster preparedness plan is an investment that ensures business continuity, protects employees and assets, safeguards your reputation and ensures your business complies with regulatory requirements.

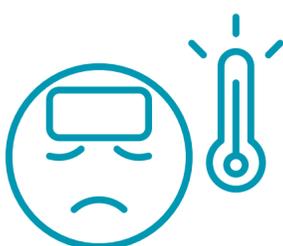
However, as a business leader, there's a lot that needs to be done to prepare your organization for disasters. Since every disaster is different, a disaster preparedness program helps you gauge its impact on your business.

Let's discuss how various disasters can hurt your business:



Natural disasters*

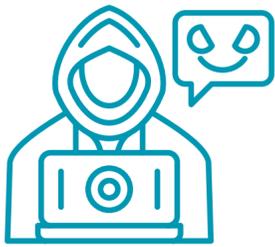
Tornadoes, wildfires, heatwaves, and winter storms are happening more frequently. These disasters can damage your IT infrastructure and disrupt communications and power supplies, leading to data loss, downtime, and revenue loss. Natural disasters can also cause injuries and fatalities if employees are present at the workplace during a disaster.



Health threats

As we know all too well, health hazards, such as the flu and other severe illnesses that can spread fast, can significantly impact your employees, customers, business partners, and suppliers.

*In addition to hurricanes and floods.



Cyberattacks

Phishing, malware, and ransomware are cyberattacks that can hurt your business in multiple ways. Cyberattacks compromise your IT systems and data, leading to downtime and financial loss. You lose customer trust and may face compliance woes, including heavy fines for failing to detect and stop a breach.



Power outages

Businesses may face power outages due to a grid or equipment failure. Natural disasters can also cause power outages. This disrupts IT operations, leading to downtime, data loss, and revenue loss.



Equipment failures

Equipment failures are a common occurrence. Server crashes, network and hardware malfunctions are equipment failures that cause IT disruptions, leading to data loss, downtime and revenue loss.



Human-caused hazards

Human-caused hazards like conflict and violence, accidental fires and spills, epidemics and biological hazards have wide-ranging consequences for business operations.

Potential Business Impacts of Unexpected Incidents and Disasters

Risk to employee safety: Natural calamities and even man-made incidents cause injuries, health issues, and even loss of life.

Physical damage to buildings, equipment, inventory and infrastructure: Disasters can necessitate extensive repairs or replacements for business continuity.

Data loss or breach: Compromised sensitive customer information can lead to legal and financial consequences.

Business interruptions, downtime and, closures: Disasters disrupt business operations, that, in turn, can impact your revenue generation and customer satisfaction.

Financial losses and increased expenses: Businesses affected by disasters face financial losses due to revenue decline, increased repair expenses, and raw materials costs. Sometimes the cost of disaster recovery is too much for small businesses to bear, forcing some of them to close shop.

Reputational damage: This can lead to loss of customer trust and negative public perception.

Some Benefits of Disaster Preparedness in IT Security

Ensures business continuity: Disaster preparedness for IT security helps ensure an organization's critical systems and data are available and secure during and after a disaster. Businesses can minimize downtime and swiftly recover from unexpected incidents.

Protects against data loss: Proper protocol can protect your business against data loss from a disaster or cyberattack.

Reduces recovery time: A strong disaster preparedness program reduces the recovery time after a disaster or cyberattack.

Limits unexpected expenses: You can avoid financial losses associated with recovery efforts, legal liabilities, reputational damage, and potential regulatory fines.

Avoids reputational damage: Avoid the reputational damage that often leads to lost customers and revenue loss resulting from an unexpected incident.

Improves compliance: Disaster preparedness measures can help an organization comply with industry and regulatory standards for IT security.

5 Components of a Comprehensive Disaster Preparedness Program

A comprehensive disaster preparedness program is vital for businesses like yours to mitigate risks, ensure business continuity, prioritize employee safety, and maintain their reputation. However, many organizations don't have the knowledge or expertise to build a solid disaster preparedness plan. These simple steps can quickly get you started. You can additionally consider taking the help of an experienced IT service provider to develop a robust plan without burning a hole in your pocket.

Build a team

- 1 • Build a dedicated team led by a program coordinator. While the program coordinator will lead the overall disaster management program, you can assign additional roles and responsibilities to other team members.
- Define clear, achievable objectives for the program, including policies, regulations, budget, schedule, resources, and evaluation.

Planning

- 2 • Identify threats, hazards, and potential disruptions to business operations and IT infrastructure by conducting a thorough risk assessment process.
- Conduct a business impact analysis to help identify critical processes and impacts from disruptions.
- Identify ways to prevent, reduce, and mitigate risks to your business.

3 Develop an implementation strategy

- Identify business-critical resources and assets.
- Develop a plan of action to respond to disruptions, resume business operations, and manage communications.
- Develop an emergency response plan that ensures employee safety and protects your business property.
- Develop a detailed business continuity plan that can identify, counter, and minimize risk from potential threats and ensure business process continuity.
- Create an IT disaster recovery plan with a clear strategy to quickly restore hardware (servers, desktops, laptops etc.), software, and data.
- Develop a crisis communication plan that lays down procedures with clear objectives, processes, and strategies to communicate to your employees, customers, and suppliers.
- Build an incident management system with clear protocols to restore regular operations and resolve incidents during unplanned interruptions.
- Conduct regular training to improve disaster preparedness among your employees.

4 Testing and exercises

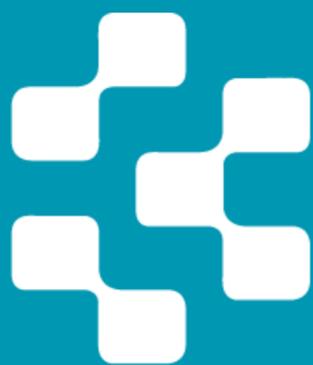
- Evaluate your business's preparedness plan to test its effectiveness and find gaps.
- Carry out routine exercises to assess employee disaster readiness.

5 Improve preparedness program

- Test and review your preparedness program.
- Identify and fix the gaps.

Is Your Business PREPARED?

Don't let a disaster stop your business from growing. Contact us today to develop a disaster preparedness program that helps you weather the storm.



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Keep IT Current

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