

# Business Continuity Planning Guide



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A Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is a written strategy which ensures that personnel and assets are protected and able to function in the event of a disaster. A BCP should contain essential information about systems and processes that a business must keep running when faced with adverse events. Developing a BCP involves the following six steps:

## 1. Developing the Plan Framework

Prepare the framework—or outline—for your BCP by drawing on two sets of information:

- Your Business Impact Analysis, identifying losses incurred by interruptions to critical business processes; and
- Your organization's available budget and resources for emergency response.

## 2. Organizing Recovery Teams

Recovery teams are made up of employees tasked with responding to emergencies. To ensure that a BCP will work as intended, prepare a list that includes:

- Recovery Team functions;
- The names of individuals assigned to the Recovery Team;
- For each individual, a description of that person's responsibilities; and
- Procedures for notifying each team member on when and how to perform his or her emergency response function.

## 3. Developing Relocation Plans

Sometimes emergencies are so disruptive to business operations that they must be relocated. When drafting your written relocation plan, be sure to include the following information:

- For each business department or area, a description of critical functions that may require relocation.
- For each business department or area, identify at least one alternate facility, including the facility's maintenance requirements, like gas or electricity. Each facility you identify should:
  - Provide sufficient physical space;
  - Be located in an area that minimizes disruption to your company's operations;
  - Be equipped with adequate emergency supplies;
  - Be reasonably accessible to lodging and transportation; and
  - Contain adequate space, workstations, and infrastructure.

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## 4. Writing Business Continuity Procedures

Your written business continuity procedures should include basic issues to address to successfully recover from an emergency, such as:

- How to detect disruptions to particular business processes;
- What to do when an event that disrupts a business process is actually detected;
- Whom to notify in the event of the disruption, so that the BCP can be activated; and
- How to assess damage to resources, to determine an appropriate response to the disruption.

## 5. Documenting Manual Workarounds

Power outages disrupt business processes that depend on electricity. Manual workarounds to these automated processes can ensure their continued operation, but the workarounds will only function if a company has prepared for them. An important part of this preparation is documenting the necessary resources for the workaround.

**Example:** A company's customer service staff uses a computerized, electronic order entry system to check available inventory, process payments, and route orders while talking to customers by phone. A power outage would shut down this business process unless the company had prepared for a manual workaround, equipping its customer service staff with paper order forms, for instance. In this case, the company should document the required manual resources of paper order forms, writing instruments, and staff to fill out the forms.

Manual workarounds require manual labor, so you may need to reassign staff or bring in temporary assistance to continue the business process concerned.

## 6. Develop an Information Technology Disaster Recovery Plan

In developing a recovery plan, keep in mind how important information technology (IT) is to your business operations. For example, in the event of a weather-related emergency, hard drives and servers may need to be moved to maintain the company computer network. Other unforeseen events, such as a ransomware attack, may render your company helpless if the proper data backup systems are not put in place before the event occurs.

An IT recovery plan should specifically include descriptions of:

- Critical software applications and data and the hardware required to run them;
- PC migration software that you will use to move applications, files, and settings to a replacement or backup computer;
- Strategies you intend to use to recover computer systems that fail or become damaged in an emergency;
- IT recovery team personnel and their roles and responsibilities; and

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- Hardware and software backup procedures, including scheduled data backups and periodic checks that data has been backed up properly. For backing up data, consider using secure online "cloud" storage or a redundant network of servers at a secure, remote data center.

## 7. Assembly, Validation & Approval

After completing the development and writing phases, test the BCP to ensure that it complies with regulations and can operate effectively in emergency conditions. Performing testing and exercises on the plan may reveal gaps or weaknesses that can be remedied.

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