

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.

Begin Your Disaster Plan by Reviewing:

- **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:

- 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



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