

Be Red Cross Ready

Emergency Preparedness for Small Businesses

Developing an emergency preparedness plan is one of the most important strategic decisions you will make as a business owner or manager. Consider how a natural, human-caused or public health emergency could affect your employees, customers and workplace.

Preparing your small business for an emergency doesn't have to be time consuming or expensive. Ask yourself the three questions below:

- How vulnerable would my business be if a disaster or other emergency were to occur?
- What is my plan to protect the business and its employees before, during and after an emergency?
- How can we integrate emergency preparedness procedures into our workplace culture?

Assess your vulnerability



Know your region and the types of disasters most likely to impact your business.

- Find out what emergencies have occurred in the past and what impact these had on other businesses in your area.
- Consider your facility's physical capacity to resist damage given its proximity to flood plains, seismic faults, dams, hazardous materials, nuclear power plants and other hazards.
- Consult with your insurance agent and learn what coverage is available and what precautions to take for disasters that may impact your business. Remember, many general policies do not cover earthquake and flood damage.

Assess the capacity of your employees to prepare for and respond to an emergency.

- Are at least 10 percent of your employees trained in basic first aid and CPR techniques? Do all employees know how to identify individuals who are trained?
- Do employees know what to do in the event of a disaster or emergency?

Identify external emergency response resources that will provide assistance during an emergency.

Who will you contact in an emergency and what assistance will they provide?

- Local and state police
- Fire department and emergency medical services organizations
- Local government officials, emergency management office
- Local American Red Cross chapter
- National Weather Service
- Telephone, water, gas and electric companies
- Neighboring businesses

Make a business continuity plan



Identify a first aid team.

- At least 10 percent of your workforce should be trained in first aid and CPR and be able to assist in emergencies.

Obtain necessary safety equipment.

- Budget for and purchase any safety equipment, emergency items and shelter-in-place supplies that may be needed, and make sure employees know how to access and use them.

Write a plan for responding to emergencies. Your plan should include:

- A system for warning and alerting everyone in the workplace about emergencies.
- A list of individuals with disabilities and/or medical conditions who may require additional assistance and what help they will need.
- Evacuation routes from your facility that feature an established location where people should gather.
- Provisions and a location for people in the building to shelter in place.

Develop a business continuity plan.

This plan will help keep your business operating as it responds and recovers from the effects of a disaster or emergency situation. To start developing your plan:

- Establish procedures for plan activation.
- Identify essential business functions and staff to carry out these functions.
- Establish procedures with suppliers, vendors and other businesses that are critical to daily operations.
- Create a plan for conducting business if the facility is not accessible. Set up electronic backup systems for vital business files.
- Identify records and documents that must be readily accessible to perform essential functions and decide where these can be stored safely and retrieved quickly.

Create a culture of preparedness



Educate employees. Consider partnering with community organizations to help create comprehensive preparedness training. All employees should know:

- Their role during a disaster and the roles and responsibilities of key personnel at your facility.
- Warning and communication procedures.
- Evacuation and shelter-in-place procedures.

Practice your plan. Practice makes perfect.

- Conduct regular evacuation, continuity plan activation and shelter-in-place drills to test the readiness of your employees and facility.
- Involve both personnel and community responders in the evaluation process and use lessons learned to improve procedures and increase training as needed.

Encourage personal preparedness among employees. Your employees will be better able to help your business respond and recover from an emergency if they know how to prepare their homes and families.

- Offer first aid, CPR, AED and preparedness training.
- Encourage your employees and their families to **Get a kit, Make a plan and Be informed.** A free online education program is available at redcross.org/beredcrossready.
- Encourage employees to identify alternate routes for going to and from your facility.
- Remind employees to always keep emergency contact information current.
- Encourage employees to learn about emergency plans at their children's schools and daycare centers.

Help your community be prepared.

Work with local community groups and government officials to ensure that your community is prepared for disasters and other emergencies.

- Host blood drives.
- Contribute supplies and/or services to emergency efforts.
- Adopt a local school or school district and support its emergency preparedness programs.

Let Your Family Know You're Safe

If your community has experienced a disaster, register on the American Red Cross Safe and Well Web site, available through redcross.org/safeandwell, to let your family and friends know about your welfare. You may also call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-723-2767) to register yourself and your family.