



eSafety Trainer *Bulletin*

HURRICANE PREPARATION: A BUSINESS SURVIVAL AND RECOVERY PLAN

A hurricane or severe weather event may have catastrophic effects on your business, your employees and your community. Following Hurricane Andrew, an estimated 8,000 businesses and 100,000 jobs were seriously impacted. It was even worse when Katrina hit the City of New Orleans. Your area could experience severe losses, all worsened by lack of preparation.

How quickly your business can get back to full operation depends on planning made in advance. Developing a written hurricane preparedness plan, and training employees to implement it, is vital to the well being of your business and your employees and their families. In major weather events such as Katrina, the entire community may depend on your businesses surviving and quickly recovering from the disaster. The following guidelines are provided to assist you in the development of your Emergency Plan.

KNOW YOUR RISK

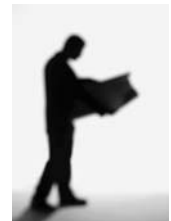
The specific industry, size and scope of your individual company will determine your organization's risk assessment needs. You should find out which disasters are most common to your area and plan for that event.

- Do you know if your business location is vulnerable to storm surge?
 - Check with your local authorities to determine at what storm level you should evacuate.
 - Check with your insurance agent or the local authorities to determine if your business is in a designated flood zone.
- Is your business vulnerable to hurricane force winds?
 - If so, have your building inspected by a licensed professional and plan accordingly.

DEVELOP A WRITTEN PLAN

When you develop your written plan, make sure to address the following major areas:

- Make plans for the protection of your business and its equipment.
- Develop a staffing policy that identifies essential employees and which of them, if any, must remain at the facility during the hurricane.
- Outline a chain of command and what each person's responsibilities will be pre and post storm.
 - The policy should identify when employees will be released from work, as well as when they are expected to return.
 - **Employees living in designated evacuation areas should be released from work to protect their families and homes once an evacuation is ordered for their area, if not before.**
 - Businesses may predetermine that employees will return to work when county or local municipal employees are ordered to return, in case telephone service is out.
 - Establish a rendezvous point outside the evacuation area and time for employees in case damage is severe and communications are disrupted.
- Develop a policy of employee support, offering assistance when possible.
- Develop procedures and policies for all phases of hurricane operations:
 - Pre-Season Preparedness
 - Hurricane Watch
 - Hurricane Warning
 - After the Hurricane
- Identify and protect vital records such as accounts receivable, customer records, tax records, and other personnel and administrative documents.
 - Review insurance policies with your agent to ensure that there is adequate coverage.
- Have your business appraised at least every five years.





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PRE-SEASON PREPAREDNESS (BEFORE JUNE 1 EACH YEAR)

- Compile an Emergency Contact List with 24-hour telephone contact numbers for essential employees.
- Identify vital records and make back-up copies and/or transfer them to microfilm.
 - Identify a safe storage area within the facility where records can be relocated, if necessary.
 - This area should be above ground level and away from windows and exterior walls, which may leak.
 - In a one-story facility, file cabinets and boxes may be placed on pallets up off the floor.
 - Consider moving vital records off-site, particularly if the business is in a storm surge vulnerable area.
- Determine responsibility for maintaining the facility. Ensure that the following items are addressed:
 - Verify that communications equipment is operational.
 - Determine the type and amount of hurricane emergency supplies necessary. All emergency supplies should be clearly marked and stored in a secure area that is accessible in an emergency.
 - Recommended supplies include:
 - A battery operated radio or TV (test reception in building).
 - A battery operated NOAA Weather Alert Radio, to monitor 24 hour weather information.
 - One flashlight per person working during the hurricane.
 - Extra batteries for radios and flashlights.
 - First-aid kit.
 - Emergency tool kit, if necessary.
 - Food and water supplies for staff assigned to the facility during the hurricane. Be sure to include utensils.
- Provide employees with hurricane preparedness information.
- Make a list of your most important customers.
 - Develop a plan to serve them during and after the storm.
- Identify key suppliers, shippers, resources, and other businesses you must interact with on a daily basis.
 - Develop professional relationships with more than one company in case your primary contractor cannot service your needs after the storm.
 - A disaster that shuts down a key supplier can be devastating to you as well.
- Prepare a list of vendors who can assist in the recovery of your business such as: recovery of water-soaked papers, debris removal, moving companies, warehouse space, off site computers, generator rental etc.

HURRICANE WATCH (36-48 HOURS PRIOR TO LANDFALL)

- **Secure** all doors, windows, and other openings against wind and water.
 - Install hurricane shutters and/or cover windows with appropriate dimension wood.
- **Tie down or bring indoors** any objects that may be blown about by hurricane winds.
- **Verify** that vital records are in a safe storage area.
 - Files, records, and storage cabinets may be wrapped in plastic for moisture protection.
 - If necessary, temporarily relocate records to a safe storage facility off-site.
- **Confirm** availability of necessary computer support.
- **Ensure** that all vehicles are serviced and fueled.
 - Determine where they can be stored during the storm.
- **Inventory** hurricane emergency supplies and restock if necessary.
- **Dismiss essential employees** temporarily so they can secure their personal property before returning to duty.
- Secure adequate cash to operate for several days.



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HURRICANE WARNING OR EVACUATION ORDER (18-24 HOURS BEFORE LANDFALL)

- If the business is located in a designated evacuation area, *cease operations* and secure the facility.
- Move desks, files, equipment and furniture away from un-shuttered windows.
 - Papers, drawings, etc. should be placed inside files or desks.
 - Wrap office equipment, such as copy machine and computers, in plastic to protect against water damage.
- Dismiss all non-essential personnel and personnel living in designated evacuation areas.
- Turn off air conditioners, disconnect electrical equipment, and turn off lights.



AFTER THE STORM

- Assess basic damages at work site including roof, interior water damage building structural damage and broken windows.
- Initiate clean up of work site, document damages, and contact your insurance agent/claims adjuster.
- Do not turn on computer equipment if there are indications of water damage or low voltage power fluctuations, broken windows or damaged equipment.
- Employees should return to work according to staffing schedule.
 - Following a disaster, your employees will need photo identification to gain access back into the disaster area to get your business, especially if it has been hit hard.
 - This is for your protection and companies large and small should be prepared ahead of time with employee identification.
 - If you do not issue photo ID to your employees, provide them with a statement on letterhead describing their employment and disaster responsibilities.
 - This letter with other photo ID (such as a Driver's License) should be sufficient to allow them back into the area.



CONCLUSION

Your business is a part of the backbone of the area's economy. Small business alone account for more than 99% of all companies with employees, employee 50% of all private sector workers and provide nearly 45% of the nation's payroll. If your business is ready to survive and recover from a disaster, your employees, customers and the local economy will be better off.

