

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:

1. Location: Consider geography, climate, location or unpopular organizational activities that could make your facility a target. Try to determine all vulnerabilities and consequences.

2. Inventory: 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.

3. Precautions: Once the risks have been identified, determine what precautions can be taken. Can alarm systems be upgraded? Is important data archived regularly?

4. Roles and Communication: If you are in a building that houses several businesses, determine roles and communication methods.

5. 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