Preparing Your Business for a Disaster:

A BASIC GUIDE FOR
BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING

PREPARE   **RESPOND**   **RECOVER**

Table of Contents

Introduction

Recommended for small businesses with fewer than 100 employees, this planning guide covers the essential areas that your organization must have in place to create a business continuity plan (BCP).

Protecting Your Business through Planning

Think of your completed plan as an umbrella to protect your organization's greatest assets: your employees, your data, your facilities and your company's reputation and brand.

The goal of this guide is to help you create a **Business Continuity Management Program** -- an ongoing management and governance process supported by senior management and resourced to ensure that the necessary steps are taken to identify the impact of potential losses, maintain viable recovery strategies and plan for various emergencies and interruptions. When implemented, the program ensures continuity of services through testing, training, maintenance and assurance.

Helping Your Business Be Better Prepared

To minimize a crisis and its impact on your business, this approach uses the following tools:

1. **Templates:** Throughout this document, there are links to templates you can download and complete with your company information. Your continuity planning team should assemble the completed templates into one document that you will store in both electronic and physical forms.
2. **Resource Library:** We have created a collection of resources that your company can access in time of need or for planning purposes. Click here to access the online resource library.

About the Plan

This planning process seeks to align with the standards of the business continuity practices of Disaster Recovery International. This is intended as a guide and resource, providing helpful advice. It is not all-encompassing. It is not intended by the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce as an ironclad planning solution immunizing the company from a disaster or a disaster's impact on operations and profitability.

Collectively, the materials presented here are aimed at helping Myrtle Beach area, South Carolina, businesses:

Before a disaster:
- Reduce dependence on key personnel
- Establish communication channels and chains of command for decision-making and communication with employees
- Decrease potential threats and exposures
- Lower the possibility of a disaster
- Maintain best practices

During a disaster:
- Avoid disruptions to the productivity of a business
- Protect employees and customers

- Safeguard critical assets
- Minimize confusion and delays

After a disaster:
- Reduce potential financial loss
- Ensure organizational stability and an orderly recovery

Understanding the Disaster Cycle

As your company begins its planning, it is important to understand the four main phases of a disaster, which are listed below. Note that timeframes for each phase will vary based on your company and core business functions. Increasingly, time frames have become shorter because of technology solutions and increased demands by customers for availability of services.

Mitigation and Preparation
- Actions taken by the business: continuous review of your BCP and new procedures to ensure effective recovery of services by all critical departments during any disaster
- Examples of actions: insurance assessment, risk mapping, establishing an alternate work location, developing policy and procedures for working remotely
- General timeline: ongoing

Response
- Actions taken by the business: ensuring the safety of and minimizing injuries to staff during a disaster
- Examples of actions: activating emergency plans, evacuations, salvage
- General timeline: 0–72 hours after the event

Recovery
- Actions taken by the business: processes required to return the processes and support functions to operational stability following an interruption or disaster and during the return to normal functions
- Examples of actions: recovery of data, restoring critical business functions
- General timeline: more than 72 hours after the event

Restoration
- Actions taken by the business: establish procedures for repairing or relocating the primary site, migrate operations from recovery site to primary facility, stabilize to normal processing of business
- Examples of actions: plans are made to return critical production equipment to primary facility
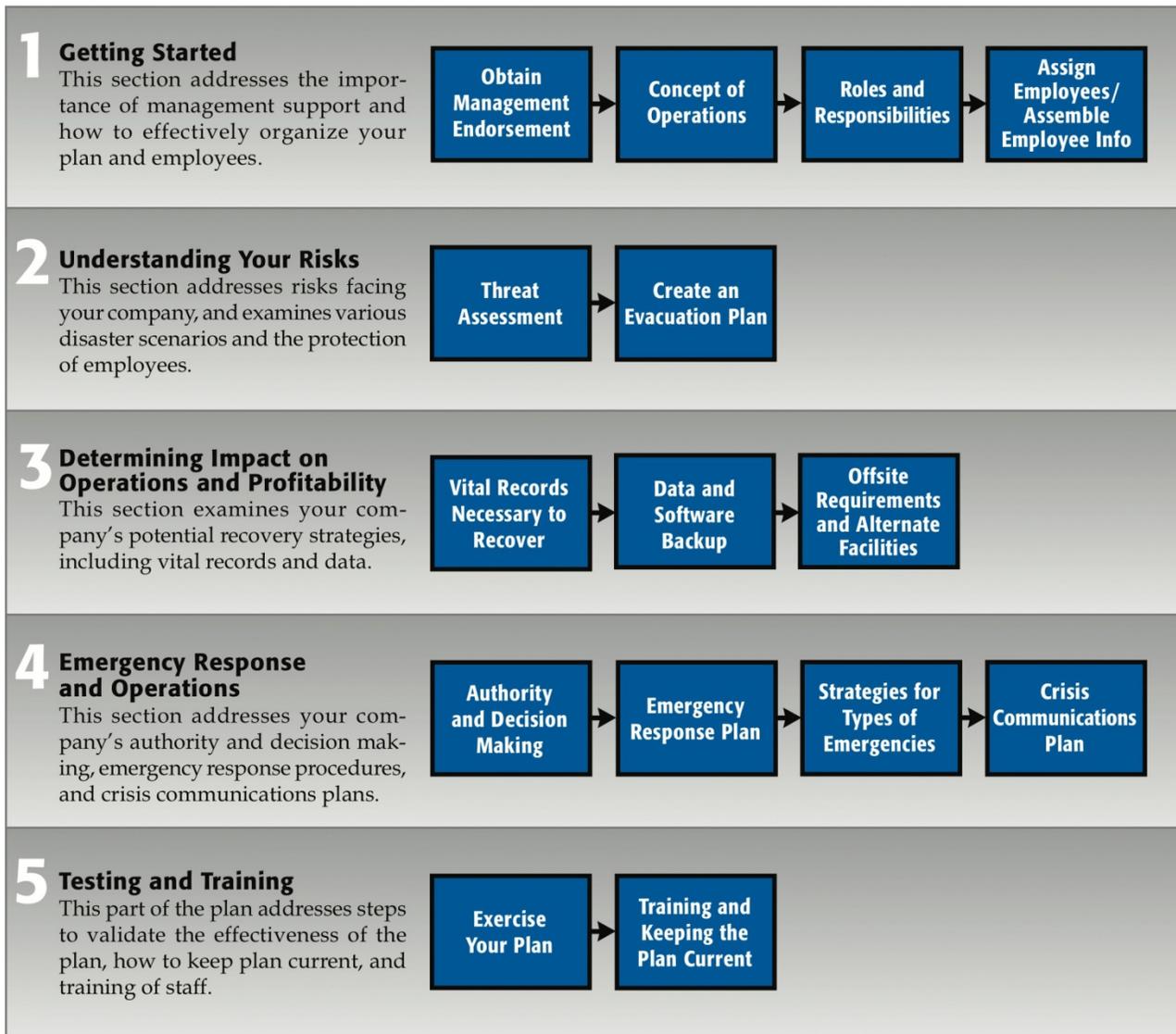- General timeline: determined by actions in recovery phase

The Top 10 Elements of Your Company's Plan

The following checklist identifies the 10 most important concerns your company's plan must address. Each of these concerns is addressed in this planning guide.

	#	Category	Must Have	Should Have
Mitigation and Preparation	**#1**	Leadership	**Leadership and key employees know what to do when disaster strikes.**	Backup personnel are trained and know what to do.
	#2	Risks	**The company has assessed its risks, both internally and externally.**	The company knows its insurance coverage and its adequacy.
	#3	Business Operations	**The company knows what vital records and systems are critical to its business.**	The company has documented procedures for how it will recover its critical business functions after a disaster.
Response	**#4**	Emergencies	**The company has a plan to respond to emergency situations and most probable threats.**	The company has a way to coordinate with external authorities.
	#5		**The company knows what emergency supplies they need and has assembled them.**	
	#6	Communications	**The company has a crisis communications plan to communicate internally and externally.**	
Recovery	**#7**	Data	**The company has the ability to back up and recover its vital records.**	
	#8	Alternate Location	**The company has a plan for an alternate location for recovery.**	
Ongoing	**#9**	Testing	**The company has exercised its plan for IT recovery of data.**	The company has exercised its plan for IT and its core business functions.
	#10	Training	**The company has performed a simulation and walked through drills of business functions.**	

Planning Roadmap

Use the graphic below as a guideline for assembling your completed business continuity plan.

1 Getting Started
This section addresses the importance of management support and how to effectively organize your plan and employees.

Obtain Management Endorsement → Concept of Operations → Roles and Responsibilities → Assign Employees/ Assemble Employee Info

2 Understanding Your Risks
This section addresses risks facing your company, and examines various disaster scenarios and the protection of employees.

Threat Assessment → Create an Evacuation Plan

3 Determining Impact on Operations and Profitability
This section examines your company's potential recovery strategies, including vital records and data.

Vital Records Necessary to Recover → Data and Software Backup → Offsite Requirements and Alternate Facilities

4 Emergency Response and Operations
This section addresses your company's authority and decision making, emergency response procedures, and crisis communications plans.

Authority and Decision Making → Emergency Response Plan → Strategies for Types of Emergencies → Crisis Communications Plan

5 Testing and Training
This part of the plan addresses steps to validate the effectiveness of the plan, how to keep plan current, and training of staff.

Exercise Your Plan → Training and Keeping the Plan Current

Section 1

Getting Started

Obtain Management Endorsement
A successful business continuity program requires support, involvement and financial resources from the company's senior leader or leadership team.

Click here for a template you can use to develop an executive letter of support.

Establish a Concept of Operations
This lays the groundwork to ensure that the critical operational processes of your business continue to function during and after the disaster or incident that interrupts your business.
It should take into account the impact of the interruption on:
- Employees, visitors and operation at company's main office and satellite offices, if appropriate.
- Customers
- Vendors
- Others (investors, regulators, etc.)

Click here for a template you can use to develop a concept of operations.

Define Roles and Responsibilities
Depending on the size of your company, this may include several teams, with each team leader serving on the overall crisis management team or a single team with representatives of each defined area.
- Your crisis management team should include:
  - Senior leadership with responsibility for:
    - Declaring the crisis
    - Issuing initial objectives
    - "Quarterbacking" the company's response and recovery
  - A steering committee responsible for:
    - Building the plan for the specific crisis
    - Ensuring all responsibilities are assigned to a team member
    - Managing implementation of the plan through the recovery period

- Recovery teams include the areas below, each led by a manager. These managers also serve on the steering committee.
  - Administration
  - Customer service
  - Facilities
  - Communications
  - Manufacturing/production
  - IT
  - HR

       o Operations/logistics

[Click here for a template you can use to outline key roles and responsibilities of your recovery teams.](#)

Assign Employees to Teams and Assemble Employee Information
This should be done early in the planning process, as it assigns team members and facilitates the establishment of an employee call tree.

- Create an employee contact database
- Collect each employee's personal email address to ensure continuity in the event your primary email is unavailable
- Update information quarterly

[Click here for a sample employee contact form.](#)

Section 2

Understanding Your Risks

Threat Assessment
Identify the internal and external threats or disasters that could adversely affect your business, its people, data, facilities and/or reputation, and what steps you can take to prevent or minimize the impact.

- Identify and prioritize potential risks
- Focus on *probability*, rather than *severity*
- Consider these key areas:
    - Business continuity
    - Communications
    - Employees
    - Facilities
    - Decision-making

[Click here for a worksheet you can use to identify the threats facing your company and their potential impact on the company's core business functions.](#) (*Note:* This completed worksheet will not officially become part of your plan.)

Create an Evacuation Plan
In some emergencies, it may be necessary to evacuate your business facility. Your plan should consider the following:

- A clear chain of command and employee roles
- Evacuation protocols and routes
- Procedures for assisting visitors, clients, customers and persons with disabilities
- Designated personnel to shut down critical operations and training to identify when to abandon operations and evacuate themselves

- A system for accounting for all personnel
- Role of local emergency management and external resources

[Click here for a template you can use to develop an evacuation plan.](#)

Section 3

Determining Impact on Operations and Profitability

Vital Records Necessary to Recover

In the event of a disaster, it is important to your operation to be able to access vital records and documentation, both manual and electronic, quickly and easily. Key steps are:
- Identify documentation and vital record needs
- Evaluate existing backup and restoration procedures for vital records and strengthen as needed
- Ensure that vital records are stored offsite with secure protocols
- Identify critical resources and methods to retrieve them

Data and Software Backup

Data files are the lifeblood of your company. In establishing backup priorities, consider all types of information and the potential impact from loss of such files. This includes financial, administrative and operating information, and application and security software.

Retention of current data files, or older master files and the transaction files necessary to bring them current, is important so that processing can continue in the event of a disaster or other disruption.

[Click here for a template you can use to list your company's backup and storage strategies and vital records.](#)

Offsite Requirements and Alternate Facilities

In the event of a disruption to your main business location, it is important to have a plan to recover and restore critical business functions from an alternate location, not only for your technology and data needs, but for your employees as well.

[Click here for a template you can use to document these requirements.](#)

Section 4

Emergency Response and Operations

Authority and Decision Making

Having clear decision-making procedures and communication of those decisions throughout your organization can greatly impact the success of your recovery. This includes:

- Decision authority
- Activation process to respond to a disaster, including declaring the situation and plan activation
- An incident action plan to guide the decision making and communications during the management of the crisis

Click here for a template on authority and decision making. This document also includes a template you can use to develop an incident action plan.

Clearly defining the crisis management team's roles and responsibilities is important. This includes:

- Assessing the severity of an incident
- Determining management, operational and communications responses
- Overall management during implementation of the plan
- Arbitrating resource disputes among recovery teams

The following positions (or their equivalents) should be included on your crisis management team:

- CEO
- COO
- CFO
- CIO/CTO
- Business continuity manager
- Director of communications/public relations
- Legal counsel
- Trusted advisor
- Others specific to your company

Emergency Response Plan

This brief plan should address the immediate reaction and response to an emergency situation focused on safety and protecting your organization's assets. It should include:

- Documented procedures to deal initially with an emergency situation
- A crisis communications plan
- Plans for recovering your business after a disaster

Click here for a template you can use to create your emergency response plan.

Strategies for Types of Emergencies

Using the work already done by the planning team, these strategies determine the appropriate response for the specific situation by critical parts of your business. Keep in mind that you should:

- Ensure your response plan is integrated with local public emergency authority requirements and procedures
- Review impact in terms of downtime, need for alternate locations, personnel and communications
- Identify viable recovery strategies

Crisis Communications Plan

The key to responding to a crisis is the identification of a possible problem. Remember, a crisis is any situation with the *potential* to disrupt business, operations, relationships and reputation. If a potential or existing crisis is identified by or brought to the attention of senior management, the crisis communications team will take the lead on planning and implementing the communications and operational response. You must support your efforts by providing timely, accurate information to affected audiences and media to ensure facts are being presented appropriately and consistently to minimize potential damage.

Your crisis communications team should include:
- Primary members
    - Director of communications/public relations
    - Public relations counsel
    - Other employees (digital media, website, etc.)
- Secondary members
    - HR senior staff
    - IT support
    - Others, as applicable

Your crisis communications plan should include:
- Means for convening team
- Audiences for communications
- Your company's foundational/key messages
- Response plan with mechanisms to reach all audiences
- Evaluation and return to normal procedures

Click here for a template you can use to develop a crisis communications plan.

Section 5

Testing and Training

Exercise Your Plan

An untested plan may be worse than having no plan at all. Regularly scheduled reviews and updates, along with employee training, are recommended. Below are steps for a training exercise:

- Define objectives and levels of success
- Develop realistic scenarios your organization is likely to experience
- Prepare exercise controls
- Involve key personnel with roles and responsibilities in the plan
- Analyze potential business changes in light of findings
- Incorporate changes into the plan

Training and Keeping the Plan Current

Maintaining the plan is part of the business continuity program. To do so effectively, you should:

- Test the plan at least annually
- Subject the plan to independent audit and review
- Update the plan based on personnel changes and changes to internal and external environments
- Maintain awareness and training of employees

Click here for a template you can use for exercising and testing your plan.

Assembling Your Business Continuity Plan

Use the table below as a general guideline for assembling your completed BCP. Keep in mind your BCP should be treated as a confidential document, as it may contain specific information about employees, clients and business processes.

Title	Section	Areas Covered	Template(s)
Obtain Management Endorsement	1	• Executive letter of support	Executive Letter of Support
Concept of Operations	1	• Scope of plan • Responsibility overview • Methodology	Concept of Operations
Roles and Responsibilities	1	• Team structure for the organization	Roles and Responsibilities
Assign Employees to Teams	1	• Collect employee information	Employee Contact Form
Create an Evacuation Plan	2	• Evacuation procedures • Procedures to follow during identified disaster scenarios	Evacuation Plan

Vital Records	3	• Vital records • Data backup and recovery	Vital Records Data and Software Backup
Offsite Requirements and Alternate Facilities	3	• Alternate location and recovery strategies • Basic information about data and telecommunications needs at alternate site	Offsite Requirements and Alternate Facilities
Authority and Decision Making	4	• Crisis management team • Procedures to manage crisis and business continuity plans during response and recovery phases	Authority and Decision Making
Emergency Response Plan	4	• Procedures to manage an emergency	Emergency Response Plan
Crisis Communications	4	• Crisis communication plan • Notifying employees, clients, vendors, and other stakeholders (including media)	Crisis Communications
Exercising, Training and Maintaining Your Plan	5	• Exercising and testing • Maintaining your plan	Exercising and Testing
Appendix A		Contact list of your employees	To be supplied by your company
Appendix B		Vendor list and Key client information	To be supplied by your company
Appendix C		Glossary of terms	Glossary of terms

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