

Appendix K: Emergency Preparedness Checklist for Small Businesses

Emergency Preparedness Checklist for Small Businesses

Creating an emergency preparedness plan is one of the most important strategic decisions you will make as a small business owner. How would business operations continue during a natural, human-caused or public health emergency? Preparing your small business doesn't have to be time consuming or expensive. Ask yourself the questions below and use each checklist to help your business stay in business.

1. How vulnerable would your business be if an emergency were to occur?

- Know your region and the types of disaster most likely to have an impact on your business.**
 - Find out what emergencies have occurred in the past and what impact these had on other businesses in your area. One way to do this is to review a Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (HVA) obtained from your local emergency management agency.
 - Consider your facility's physical capacity to resist damage and 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.
- Know who to contact in an emergency and how they can help.** Identify and obtain agreements with external emergency response resources that will provide assistance during a disaster or other emergency.
 - Local and state police
 - Fire department and emergency medical services organizations
 - Local government officials, emergency management office
 - Local public health agency
 - Local American Red Cross chapter
 - National Weather Service
 - Telephone, water, gas and electric companies
 - Neighboring businesses

2. What is your plan to protect the business and its employees before, during and after an emergency?

- Identify a committee responsible for developing an emergency response plan.**
- Obtain necessary safety equipment.** Budget for and purchase any safety equipment, first-aid kits, Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs), fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and shelter-in-place supplies that may be needed. Make sure all employees know how to access these supplies.
- Write a plan describing how your business will respond to emergencies.** Your plan should include:
 - A clearly designated leadership structure that indicates who is in charge during emergency situations.

- A system for warning employees about emergencies and communicating with employees and local emergency management officials during a disaster or emergency.
 - Considerations for the special needs of employees with disabilities and medical conditions.
 - Procedures for communicating with employees, families, emergency response personnel and media representatives prior to, during and after an emergency.
 - Procedures for employees to follow for evacuation, sheltering-in-place and for other area-specific hazards.
 - Procedures for responding to internal medical emergencies.
- Develop a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).** This plan will help keep your business operating as it responds and recovers from the effects of a disaster or emergency situation. Here's how to start developing a COOP—
- Establish procedures for COOP activation.
 - Identify essential business functions and staff to carry out these functions.
 - Establish procedures with suppliers, vendors and other businesses critical to daily operations.
 - Create a plan for conducting business if the facility is not accessible and set up electronic back up systems for vital business records.
 - Identify records and documents that must be readily accessible to perform essential functions and store these safely, perhaps off site, where they can be retrieved quickly.

3. What can we do to integrate emergency preparedness into our workplace culture?

- Train 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
- Obtain needed equipment and supplies.** Designated employees should know how and where to access safety equipment and emergency preparedness supplies as needed:
- First aid kits
 - Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs)
 - Fire extinguishers
 - Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
 - Shelter-in-place supplies
- Practice Your Plan.** Practice makes perfect. Conduct and assess regular drills and exercises for evacuation, COOP activation, shelter-in-place and medical emergency response.
- Use the drills to assess the readiness of your employees and your facility.

- Involve both personnel and community responders in the evaluation process and use lessons learned to improve procedures and increase training as needed.
- **Encourage preparedness among employees.** Your employees will be better able to help your business respond and recover if they know how to prepare at work and at home.
 - Have at least 10% of your employees trained in first aid and CPR/AED skills to handle emergencies at work.
 - Offer first aid, CPR/AED and preparedness training
 - Encourage your employees and their families to: **Get a kit, Make a plan, Be informed.** An online education program is available to help them at www.redcross.org/BeRedCrossReady.
 - Encourage employees to identify alternate routes for going to and from your facility.
 - Remind employees to always keep their emergency contact information current.
 - Encourage employees to have an out-of-town contact they can text or call during an emergency.
 - Encourage employees to have emergency preparedness kits at work, at home and in their vehicles.
 - Encourage employees to learn about the emergency plans at their children's schools.
- **Help your community prepare.** Work with local community groups and government officials to ensure that your community is prepared for disasters and other emergencies.
 - Host blood drives.
 - Work with your local Red Cross chapter to train employees to serve on disaster assignments or conduct presentations on emergency preparedness.
 - Contribute supplies and/or services to emergency efforts.
 - Adopt a local school or school district and support their emergency preparedness programs.