

HURRICANE LESSONS LEARNED

- Disaster recovery begins before a disaster.
- If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.
- We are vulnerable to powerful forces beyond our control.
- If you don't have a business continuity plan, get one fast.
- Communicate to employees, customers, and vendors pre-hurricane.
- Share best practices, capabilities and resources with other businesses and the community to improve response efforts.
- Do not rely on authorities to provide support, local, state, or federal.
- Be prepared for self-reliance, self-sufficiency in primitive conditions.
- Establish relationships with local, state, and federal agencies on the front end. Prearranged relationships may allow you to gain access early. Also understand their plans and capabilities.
- Evaluate and know where local emergency services are available, FEMA, Red Cross, etc. Also understand their plans and capabilities.
- Determine what needs to be restored first, communications, alternate worksite, etc.
- Provide regular updates to your employees, vendors, and customers.
- Most plans generally do not account for looting, review, and update.
- Review insurance coverage, many companies hold hurricane coverage but not flood insurance.
- Notify key members of management immediately, disaster recovery team, risk management, etc. to put your recovery plan in place.
- Identify coordinators that are responsible for preparedness and response planning.
- Plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team.
- Inform employees and key players where to meet after a disaster. Determine in advance an alternate worksite away from your permanent location that will allow you to reassemble employees to conduct business.
- Create a pre-hurricane checklist for each location, building.
- Backup computers and identify alternate servers, pre-hurricane.
- Make sure that storm drains are clear to help avoid flooding.
- Conduct regular maintenance schedules to ensure that powered generators are operating properly and make sure that you have adequate fuel storage on-site.
- Know where the primary shut off valves/switches are located for natural gas, water, and electricity for each facility.
- Transfer money and any valuables off-site to an area outside the impact zone.
- Establish a 1-800 number in advance for associates to call in for guidance.
- Stock emergency supplies and assemble a disaster supply kit for each location. Identify a place to store these items.
- Have supplies and resources available for a minimum of two weeks.
- Determine the best evacuation escape route, identify at least two ways out.
- Determine safe places in your home and work for every type of disaster.
- Review plans ahead of time at your workplace, your children's school, etc.
- Pick two places (primary and secondary) to meet up with family members or associates if you get separated.

- Develop a plan to accommodate pets/livestock.
- Be prepared to be a hurricane victim for weeks, months, even years.
- Lured into the feeling that hurricane evacuations are a 1-3 day event.
- Identify employees and key customers with special needs.
- Establish vendor commitments. What's their plan? Can they step up and continue to provide necessary supplies and services?
- Money often has no value, so be prepared to barter to get what you need.
- Track the events a minimum of 5 days out, 4, 3, 2, and 1. The suggested weather tracking web site is www.nhc.noaa.gov.
- Move important assets and files up or out. Place important documents and equipment if left behind on top of desks, file cabinets, etc. in case of flooding. Place important items in sealed plastic bags.
- Secure chains and locks in advance for securing your property, i.e. gates.
- Emergency plans must be properly tested. No matter how much planning, something unforeseen can happen, so be prepared.
- Practice drills and exercises to test your plan and revise periodically.
- Test your BCP to improve performance and update your plan.
- Update your emergency contact information, key members of management, disaster recovery team members, vendor contacts, etc.
- Have an employee at ground zero to report back fact based information.
- Hold an annual kick off meeting prior to the hurricane season, so if adjustments need to be made to your plan, you will still have time.
- Enhance communications and information technology infrastructures as needed to support employees, customers and vendors.
- Talk to your communication vendors about their emergency response capabilities and alternate solutions.
- Establish a command center for communicating, have a back-up location identified.
- Communication failure can be a disaster in itself, consider alternative communication devices:
 - Land trunk lines
 - Fax line as a phone line
 - Multiple cell phone providers
 - Satellite phones
 - PDA's/text messages
 - Set up a chat room, i.e. Yahoo
 - Use mobile wireless access cards
 - Pay phones
 - Calling cards
 - Transfer phone lines in advance to supporting offices outside the impact zone.
 - Post messages at the office for employee communication
 - Make sure that laptop and cell phone batteries and spares are fully charged
 - Purchase vehicle adapter chargers for laptops and cell phones

- The goal of an effective plan is to keep people and property safe and resume normal business operations as quickly as possible. The following addresses will assist in developing a solid Business Continuity Plan.
 - www.redcross.org
 - www.fema.gov
 - www.ready.gov
 - www.asisonline.org
 - www.nfpa.org
 - www.nhc.noaa.gov/index.shtml
 - www.earlyalert.com
 - www.AccuWeather