

# Getting Started with Disaster Recovery Planning

Creating a disaster recovery plan can seem overwhelming, given the complexity and demands of even the smallest organizations. We have found it helpful to keep the following points in mind as you proceed.

**Remember, a disaster plan is never a fixed, finished document.** A good plan evolves and improves over time. Therefore, it doesn't have to be perfect the first time you do it. The important thing is to get started!

**Be systematic in your plan.** Don't try to outguess Nature and plan for a flood, a hurricane, or a fire. You'll quickly become overwhelmed by the possibilities. Instead, look at the common results from any disaster:

- Loss of information
- Loss of access to information and facilities
- Loss of personnel

Make a matrix, with these three items as the columns, and each of your activities as a row. (Beyond the obvious, your activities include things like “accounts receivable,” “payroll,” “real estate management,” etc., depending on your situation.) Then determine how you would respond to loss of information, access, and/or personnel for each function.

**Designate a second-in-command.** If the person normally in charge is injured in the disaster or not available, the second-in-command should be named in the plan, and delegated full authority in this situation. If you can't name someone, you have already pinpointed one of your greatest vulnerabilities!

**List individual responsibilities ahead of time, and assign specific people to each task.** Again, beyond the obvious, this includes tasks such as notifying your suppliers where to deliver, calling your most important customers to tell them what has happened, calling your Board members, etc.

**Protect critical paper records.** Even in a fully automated organization, there can be vulnerable records—such as pending contracts, advertising, research, loan applications, etc.—which only exist on paper.

**Keep copies of all of your forms off site.** This includes extra checks and purchase orders so that you can buy the emergency supplies you need.

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**Set clear priorities among your activities.** After a disaster, you will not return everything to normal at the same time. Decide beforehand the longest amount of time you are willing to be “dead in the water” for each of your activities.

**Have a backup connection to your main computer.** Make sure that your main computer (either at your service bureau, your main office, or your hot-site) can “dial out” in the event that your leased-lines are lost, or in the event that you must relocate to a different site.

**Keep a copy of your disaster plan at home.** Make sure it includes the home phone numbers of the service people you rely on: your insurance agent, plumber, electrician, etc.

Finally, don't try to go it alone. People throughout your organization may have dealt with disasters before and may have their own ideas about what they'd do in an emergency. If you include their input and advice you'll not only benefit from their experience, but also find it easier to gain their cooperation in the process!

The Disaster Recovery Yellow Pages, published by Edwards Information, LLC has the resources organizations need to plan for, and recover from, a disaster of any kind. It's the most comprehensive directory in the field with more than 3100 listings in 355 categories. The directory helps professional business continuity managers, emergency managers, and others involved in disaster planning locate hard-to-find resources, both during the planning process and in the event of an emergency. For more information on the directory, visit [www.EdwardsInformation.com](http://www.EdwardsInformation.com) or call **1-800-990-9936**.