

Business continuity planning must account for both man-made and natural disasters. You should plan in advance to manage any emergency. Be prepared to assess the situation, use common sense and available resources to take care of yourself, your co-workers and your business.

Continuity Planning: Your organization's risks will vary according to the specific industry, size, scope and location of your individual company. Start by reviewing your business process flow diagram, if one exists, to identify operations that are critical to survival and recovery. Carefully assess your internal and external business functions to determine which staff, materials, procedures, and equipment are absolutely necessary to keep your business operating. To understand the hazards that Mesa County is vulnerable to, as well as recurrence potential and significance please review the Mesa County Hazard Mitigation Plan. You should also establish procedures for succession of management.

Make a list of your most important customers and proactively plan ways to serve them during and after a disaster. Also identify key suppliers, shippers, resources and other businesses you must interact with on a daily basis. A disaster that shuts down a key supplier can be devastating to your business.

Plan what you will do if your business facility is not accessible. Talk with your staff and co-workers and frequently review and practice what you intend to do during and after an emergency. Remember that as your business changes over time, so do your preparedness needs. Review and update your plan annually and communicate changes to your employees.

Emergency Planning for Employees: Your Employees are your business' most valuable asset. Two-way communication is vital before, during, and after a disaster. Include emergency information in newsletters, on your company intranet, in periodic employee emails and in other communications tools. Designate a phone number where employees can leave an "I'm okay" message in a disaster. If you have employees with disabilities or special needs, ask them what assistance, if any, they require.

Emergency Supplies: When preparing for emergency situations, it's best to think first about basics of survival: fresh water, food, clean air and warmth. Encourage everyone to have a portable emergency supply kit customized to meet their personal needs, such as the inclusion of essential medications. Talk to your employees about what emergency supplies the company can feasibly provide, if any, and which ones individuals should consider keeping on hand. Recommended emergency supplies include:

- Water
- Food
- Battery-powered radio
- Battery-powered NOAA weather radio with an alert function
- Extra batteries
- Flashlight
- First aid kit
- Whistle
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Filter mask
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape in the event of an airborne chemical hazard
- Moist towelettes

- Garbage bags ties for personal sanitation

Keep copies of important records such as site maps, building plans, insurance policies, employee contact and identification information, bank account records, supplier and shipping contact lists, computer backups, and other priority documents in a waterproof, fireproof portable container. Store a second set of records at an off-site location

Planning to Stay or Go: Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the disaster, the first important decision after an incident occurs is whether to shelter-in-place or evacuate. You should understand and plan for both possibilities in advance by developing clear, well-thought-out plans.

In an emergency, local authorities may or may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should monitor television or radio news reports for information or official instructions as they become available.

Make an Evacuation Plan: Some disasters will require employees to leave the workplace quickly. The ability to evacuate workers, customers and visitors effectively can save lives. If your business operates out of more than one location, establish evacuation procedures for each individual building. If your company is in a high-rise building, an industrial park, or even a small strip mall, it is important to coordinate and practice with other tenants or businesses to avoid confusion and potential gridlock.

Make a Shelter-in-Place Plan: There may be situations when it's best to stay where you are to avoid any uncertainty outside. There are other circumstances, such as during a chemical incident, when specifically how and where you take shelter is a matter of survival. You should understand the differences and plan for all possibilities.