

Disaster Preparedness for Businesses of All Sizes



The SBA encourages business owners to prepare for the possibility of a major disaster and offers the following tips:

- Start the disaster plan by identifying what your operation needs to do to protect itself in the face of a natural disaster. Even if you don't own the building where you do business, take steps to protect your assets.
- Determine what production machinery, computers and other essential equipment is needed to keep your business open. Store extra supplies offsite, and make a plan for a temporary location if your company is forced to relocate after the disaster. Be ready for utility disruptions with a portable generator.
- Find escape routes from the business and establish meeting places. Make sure everyone understands the emergency plan before the storm hits. Designate a contact person to communicate with other employees, customers and vendors.
- Review your insurance coverage to make sure you understand what is not covered. Most policies don't cover flood damage.
- The National Flood Insurance Program provides coverage to property owners. Go to the NFIP Web site at www.floodsmart.gov.
- Consider business interruption insurance. It covers operating expenses, like utilities, and compensates you for the income lost after a temporary closure.
- Make back-up copies of all tax, accounting, payroll and production records and customer data on computer hard drives, and store the records at an offsite location at least 100 miles away. Important documents should be saved in fireproof safe deposit boxes.
- To protect your property from wind damage, install impact-resistant windows and door systems, or plywood shutters. Hire a professional to evaluate your roof to make sure it can weather a major storm.
- Develop a post-disaster communications strategy. Keep current phone numbers for your suppliers, employees, customers, utility companies, local media, and emergency agencies. Appoint a spokesperson to get the word out that your company is still open and on the road to recovery, to dispel rumors of business failure.
- More preparedness tips for businesses, homeowners and renters are available on the SBA's Web site at www.sba.gov/disaster_recov/prepared/getready.html. The Institute for Business and Home Safety (www.ibhs.org) also has information on protecting your home or business. The federal government's preparedness Web site www.ready.gov is another helpful resource.