



Chapter Three: Considerations for organisations

General Advice on Preparing for Emergencies

3.1 Incidents described in this document, whether natural, accidental or deliberate, can cause significant disruption to businesses and other organisations. Organisations may wish to put in place arrangements to mitigate the impact of this disruption. These arrangements can help them return to normal levels of business more rapidly, limit the volume of business lost to competitors, and reduce the chances of customers losing confidence in them. Not only is such planning widely regarded as good business sense, it could even be critical to an organisation's survival.

BS 25999

In 2007, a British Standard for business continuity was introduced (BS 25999). It provides for the first time a yardstick that can be used to assess the suitability of an organisation's business continuity arrangements. For further information about the standard, visit the British Standards Institution's website (www.bsigroup.co.uk/bs25999).

3.2 The process of developing plans to cope with disruptive incidents is known as Business Continuity Management (BCM). It involves identifying critical business activities and resources, and planning how to maintain them in the event of a disruptive incident.

3.3 To implement BCM, organisations need to ask themselves the following questions:

- What are your key products and services?
- What are the critical activities and resources required to deliver these (e.g. personnel, technology, premises, information or supplies)?

- What are the risks to these activities and resources?
- How will your organisation maintain these critical activities in the event of an incident?

3.4 In partnership with key stakeholders, the Cabinet Office has developed a BCM Toolkit²² to help commercial, public sector and voluntary organisations develop appropriate business continuity plans. These should be exercised regularly to ensure they are workable and that adequate measures are in place to provide information to staff and key stakeholders in the event of an emergency.

Specific Considerations for Organisations

3.5 Employers may wish to consider the following questions when developing their business continuity plans.

How would your organisation cope with significant reductions in staff?

3.6 Organisations may wish to put in place measures to maintain essential business activities for several weeks in the event of high levels of staff absence. These measures could include:

- Identifying the activities that are critical to their business and those which could be curtailed or stopped during periods of significant staff shortages.
- Calculating the minimum number of staff required to carry out critical activities.
- Identifying the skills and expertise required to undertake the critical activities and develop an inventory of staff skills to assist with staff redeployment.

- Identifying staff who could be moved from non-essential to critical activities and possible training requirements.
- Introducing cross-training of skills across a number of individuals.
- Identifying essential posts and individuals whose absence would place business continuity at particular risk, and incorporating succession planning for key personnel.
- Carrying out mapping of business processes to allow staff to undertake different roles. This could involve:
 - describing the flow of materials, information and documents;
 - displaying the various tasks contained within the processes;
 - indicating the decisions that need to be made along the chain;
 - showing the essential relationships and interdependencies between the process steps.
- Developing or expanding self-service and on-line options for customers and business partners.

3.7 Organisations may also wish to think about the specific consequences of an influenza pandemic upon their workforce. Relevant information can be found on the Department of Health's website.²³

How would denial of access to a site or geographical area affect your organisation?

3.8 Denial of access to a site or area can arise from a variety of incidents and range from a few hours to many months. During an incident, the emergency

services will provide advice on what action should be taken. This advice should be followed at all times. However, organisations should consider developing evacuation and invacuation²⁴ plans in case staff, customers and visitors need to leave or shelter within premises in an emergency. When creating these plans, organisations may wish to:

- Consider in advance under what circumstances the organisation may need to evacuate or invacuate staff.
- Develop safety, first-aid or evacuation assistance teams and plans which can support staff during those circumstances.
- Develop plans to locate and account for those who were on site or in the immediate vicinity and any special arrangements required for vulnerable staff.
- Consider how to provide staff and customer communications and safety briefings in the event of an evacuation or invacuation.
- Think about how staff will be moved from the assembly point to an alternative site, transported home, or moved to a place of safety.
- Ensure there is a robust telephone and/or email cascade system for contacting staff (outside working hours if necessary). This could be used for providing information on where staff will be relocated in an emergency.
- Ensure that data is backed-up and kept off site and test that any backed-up data can be recovered.
- Think about the mechanisms in place to provide information to other stakeholders such as suppliers and key customers.

²³ www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Flu/PandemicFlu/index.htm

²⁴ Moving staff, customers and visitors to a safe place within a building and away from danger.

- Prepare an 'emergency pack' of items that will help your organisation to implement its plans. This could include:
 - copies of business continuity plan(s), including staff contact information and customer/supplier details;
 - a building site plan;
 - insurance company details;
 - financial information;
 - equipment such as computer back up disks, USB memory sticks, spare keys and security codes;
 - a fully charged mobile telephone.
- Consider what other essential items may need to be moved to the alternative site(s) to ensure essential business functions are maintained.
- Ensure members of staff are familiar with evacuation and invacuation procedures and that these are regularly exercised.

3.9 Where possible, employers may also want to arrange an alternative (back-up) site and consider:

- From what sites (locations or premises) the organisation currently conducts its critical activities.
- What plant, machinery and other facilities are required to carry out critical activities.
- Whether or not the organisation would be able to continue essential activities following denial of access to all physical assets in a particular area.
- What alternative sites the organisation has access to.

- Whether the alternative sites are susceptible to the same (or other) risks as the current site.

3.10 Organisations may need to adapt working practices if premises were to be evacuated. This could involve:

- The displacement of staff performing less urgent business processes with staff performing higher priority activities.
- Remote working (e.g. staff working from home or other locations).
- Ensuring that essential information is stored securely (e.g. in a fire proof safe), and developing plans for salvaging assets and records.

How would your organisation cope with an unexpected loss of mains electricity?

3.11 Organisations may want to prepare for the possibility of total loss of electricity for a few days and planned temporary rota cuts²⁵ for several hours each day over a number of weeks or months.

3.12 Loss of mains electricity can affect lighting, heating, air conditioning and electronic equipment, and could result in data loss or corruption. However, if the electricity outage is widespread, the secondary effects can also include:

- loss of mains water and sewerage after six hours;
- loss of mobile communications after one hour, depending on back-up arrangements;
- disruption to financial transactions;
- closure of petrol stations.

²⁵ Where consumers are cut off in rolling blocks of a few hours on a pre-planned rota, variable according to the scale of the supply shortage.

3.13 Organisations can prepare for this disruption by considering:

- Alternative methods of working which do not require mains electricity.
- Rostering the workforce to match known rota cuts.
- Closing non-essential premises in the event of prolonged loss of electricity.
- Having back-up power supplies (e.g. standby generators or uninterruptible power supplies).
- Backing-up data regularly.

How would a temporary disruption to gas supplies affect your organisation?

3.14 Organisations can prepare for a loss of gas supplies by considering:

- Availability of alternative heating sources.
- Alternative methods of working such as closure of non-essential premises and movement of essential services to unaffected locations.

3.15 Loss of gas supplies could also lead to loss of electricity (with associated consequences as described above).

Does your organisation have adequate business continuity measures in place to cope with significant disruption to transport?

3.16 Disruption to local, regional or international transport used by staff or for the delivery of supplies may affect critical activities, both directly and indirectly. To minimise the impact of this disruption, employers may wish to consider:

- Recording alternative routes and methods of transport available to staff to assess who may have difficulties getting to work, or travelling for business purposes, and who may be able to work remotely if necessary.
- Examining contingency options so that the impact of a disruption on the delivery of goods and services can be mitigated.

How would your organisation be affected by disruption to the supply of mains water and sewerage?

3.17 Mains water and sewerage could be disrupted for several weeks. To prepare for such disruption, businesses may wish to consider:

- The health and safety needs of staff (e.g. the requirement for drinking water and sanitation).
- How water critical services would be affected (e.g. air conditioning or computer cooling systems).

Is your organisation prepared for disruption to the availability of oil and fuel?

3.18 To prepare themselves for possible disruption, organisations may want to think about:

- The impact of lack of availability of fuel on their supply chains and operations.
- Limiting the use of existing fuel to critical activities.
- Whether you have access to existing back-up supplies.
- The impact on staff transportation arrangements.

- Encouraging flexibility in staff working practices; including:
 - increased working from home;
 - car sharing;
 - the use of public transport by staff.

3.19 In the event of very significant fuel disruption, the Government may implement the National Emergency Plan for Fuel, which would prioritise transport fuel resources to blue light organisations and other essential service providers, with the possibility of rationing supply to retail customers.

How would a loss of telecommunications affect your organisation?

3.20 Many organisations use telecommunication services that are reliant on the same physical infrastructure, technology and suppliers. They could therefore experience concurrent disruption to mobile phones and landline networks, messaging systems, internet access and video conferencing. Organisations can help themselves prepare for such disruption by:

- Avoiding reliance on a single technical solution (e.g. not relying solely on mobile phones for critical communications).
- Maintaining up-to-date contact details to ensure non-standard communication methods can be employed.
- Focusing on identification and maintenance of critical users' access to communications where possible.

How would your organisation cope with the loss of, or disruption to, IT systems?

3.21 Most organisations today rely on some form of IT system to perform their critical activities. To prepare for possible disruption to these systems, organisations may wish to consider:

- Which IT systems are needed to carry out critical activities.
- What information is needed to carry out critical activities.
- How this information is stored and how it is accessed.
- Maintaining the same technology at different locations that will not be affected by the same disruption.
- Ensuring data is backed-up and copies are kept securely off site.

Does your organisation have plans in place to cope with the disruption affecting key suppliers or partners?

3.22 Even if your organisation is not directly affected by an emergency, disruption to key suppliers or partners can have significant effects on your business. To minimise the impact of this disruption you may wish to consider:

- Identifying the key suppliers or partners who you depend upon to undertake your critical activities.

- Determining whether your business has any reciprocal arrangements with other organisations.
- Checking whether suppliers have arrangements in place to sustain their own service provision.
- Identifying alternative sources of supplies.

3.23 Additional guidance on how to develop business continuity plans is available on the Government's *Preparing for Emergencies* website – www.preparingforemergencies.gov.uk.

Further Information:

More information on how businesses can prepare for emergencies is available on the following websites.

General Advice:

UK Resilience

www.ukresilience.gov.uk

Wales Resilience

www.walesresilience.org

Scottish Preparing for Emergencies & BCM Guidance

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/emergencies

Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies

www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/emergencies

British Standards Institution

www.bsigroup.co.uk/bs25999

Specific Advice across the UK:

Road Traffic

www.highways.gov.uk

www.trafficscotland.org

www.roadsni.gov.uk

Rail

www.nationalrail.co.uk

www.translink.co.uk

Fuel & Gas

www.berr.gov.uk

www.detini.gov.uk

Electricity

www.berr.gov.uk

www.detini.gov.uk

Water Supply

www.defra.gov.uk

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

www.sepa.org.uk

www.drdni.gov.uk

www.niwater.com

Food

www.food.gov.uk

Human Diseases

www.dh.gov.uk
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
www.scot.nhs.uk
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk
www.hscni.net
www.ukresilience.gov.uk/pandemicflu/guidance/business.aspx

Animal Diseases

www.defra.gov.uk
www.dardni.gov.uk

Telecommunications and IT

www.cpni.gov.uk

Health and Safety

www.hse.gov.uk

Schools

www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies
www.deni.gov.uk

Severe Weather

www.metoffice.gov.uk

Flooding

www.environment-agency.gov.uk
www.riversagencycyni.gov.uk

Fire

www.communities.gov.uk/fire

Useful telephone numbers:

Floodline (England and Wales)

0845 988 1188

Highways Agency – 24 hours traffic

08700 660 115

Highways Agency Information Line

08457 50 40 30

Traffic Scotland

0800 028 1414

Traffic Watch (Northern Ireland)

0845 712 3321

National Rail Enquiries

08457 48 49 50

Translink (Northern Ireland)

028 9066 6630

**Foreign Office & Commonwealth Office
Travel Advice**

0870 606 0290

NHS Direct (England & Wales)

0845 46 47

NHS 24 (Scotland)

08454 24 24 24