



Civil contingencies and your business – Advice to members

There will be instances when your business' continuity will be affected by external forces such as floods, flu pandemics, terrorism and extreme weather. Whilst it would be impossible to guard our business against all the consequences of these events, it is both possible and extremely useful to think about how you could lessen their impact and keep your business running.

By using the checklist below and keeping yourself updated with information on the *Business Link* website (www.businesslink.gov.uk), you should be able to be better prepared.

Understand your business

Consider all risks to your business' continuity:

- Loss of staff
- Loss of systems (IT and communications)
- Loss of utilities e.g. water, gas or electricity
- Loss of or access to premises
- Loss of key suppliers
- Disruption to transport
- Loss or growth of demand

Plan ways to deal with these risks

Identify the critical activities undertaken by your business that would have to continue during an emergency. Identify the employees and other inputs that support those activities, such as suppliers of raw materials. Consider how internal resources could be reallocated to ensure that critical activities continue.

Plan for employee absence: this may be due to sickness, family emergencies and possible disruption to transport and other services.

- Check that your employees know how to fulfil other roles so that they can act as a back-up when others are absent
- Check that they have access to each other's work and stored documents
- Review absence policies guided by advice issued by Government; establish policies for sick leave and other absences unique to the emergency situation

Discuss with your suppliers and sub-contractors whether they have a robust business continuity plan in place and how their implementation of this may affect your business. Your organisation is only as good as those on whom it depends.

Review your current business plan

- Consider your customers' and employees' needs during this time and review your business arrangements to consider changes to these.
- For example, are your employees able to work from home (remote working), do they have the right equipment and access to files and email and can you enhance mail-order and internet shopping facilities for your customers who may prefer to shop from home?
 - Consider more flexible working hours for your staff.
- You should develop a communications plan which should be reviewed when there are changes to your business. This plan should identify both key contacts (with back-ups where possible) and the chain of communications with regard to your suppliers and customers.
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Communications

- Keep your employees aware of current civil contingency situations. Inform them of places to seek help such as the Directgov website (www.direct.gov.uk). For specific emergencies the Government may also put in place special helplines or websites which employees can use for additional information. These will be advertised in the media and on the Business Link website. Ensure that they are fully aware of aspects of the business' plan that affect them, and use their knowledge to prepare this plan. Employees are usually very effective at identifying possible risks to their businesses.
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Local authorities have a duty to provide advice to businesses about these issues and (along with other emergency responders) maintain a Community Risk Register that sets out the potential risks in your area.

More advice on these and other actions that individuals can undertake to prepare for emergencies can be found at; www.direct.gov.uk/en/Governmentcitizensandrights/Dealingwithemergencies/Preparingforemergencies/index.htm