

do **1** thing/BUSINESS

SMALL STEPS TOWARD PREPARING YOUR BUSINESS FOR EMERGENCIES

Step 3: Facilities



THE GOAL: Take steps before, during, and after a disaster to keep your business running, even if you and your employees can't get to your normal worksite.

If your facility is damaged, how will you continue to operate? Taking steps to protect your building and its contents ahead of time can get you back into your facility faster. Alternate worksites, telecommuting, even working from a vehicle are all potential solutions, but need planning ahead of time to make them successful.

▶▶▶ CHOOSE ONE OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH TO PREPARE YOUR BUSINESS FOR A POTENTIAL EMERGENCY:

- ☐ **Take steps to protect your building from hazards.**
- ☐ **Identify alternate worksites in the event that your building becomes unusable.**
- ☐ **Consider risk when choosing a new business location.**

Location may be one of your business' most valuable assets. It could also be a liability if you are in a hazard-prone area. If you haven't already done so, identify what hazards might affect your facilities. See Do 1 Thing Business Month 1: Risk Assessment for more information.

Take steps to protect your building from hazards.

Mitigation is the process of protecting your property by reducing the impact that disasters will have. Research shows that every dollar spent on mitigation ahead of time saves four dollars when disaster strikes. Decide how much you can invest now and develop a plan to keep investing over time. Even if you can't do everything, every small step you can take can make your business more resilient.

If you own the building, talk to a contractor about the cost of structural mitigation like earthquake or flood retrofitting, hurricane shutters or fire suppression systems. Plan for those as capital improvements are made in the future.

If you don't own the building your business is in, talk to the building owner about mitigation. They are protecting their own business assets by mitigating, as well as yours.

There are many things you can do that are less costly, but that can provide big savings in prevented damage.

FOR EXAMPLE:

1. Make sure there are working fire extinguishers throughout your facility and that staff is trained in how and when to use them. Make sure everyone also understands when a fire is too big to try to use a fire extinguisher. Contact your local fire department and see if they can offer any training.
 - Visit <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/> for information on fire safety and training
 - Visit <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/firesafety/index.html> for OSHA fire safety requirements
2. Use straps to fasten down shelves, filing cabinets, cubicles, and tabletop equipment to prevent losses in an earthquake or tornado.
 - Visit <http://www.fema.gov/earthquake/earthquake-information-businesses-and-other-organizations> for information on earthquake safety
 - Visit <https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/tornado/index.html> for tornado safety planning.
3. Install flood drain plugs in floor drains to prevent sanitary or storm sewer backups into your building.
 - Visit <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/10618?id=2737> to download a copy of FEMA Guide 551: Selecting Appropriate Mitigation Measures for Floodprone Structures.

☐ **Identify alternate worksites in the event that your building becomes unusable.**

BUSINESSES MAY BECOME INACCESSIBLE IN A DISASTER FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS.

The building itself may be damaged, or damage to the surrounding neighborhood or roads could prevent access. A release of hazardous materials or biohazards could contaminate your building. Power may be out, making it impossible for you to continue to operate from that location.

- **If you can't get into your building, can you stay in business?**
- **Make a plan to relocate your critical operations to another site.** Look for sites that will support your critical systems (customer accessibility, phones, computers, internet access, adequate power and workspace, etc.). If you have employees with disabilities, think about what accessibility issues might exist with an alternate site, and what adaptive technology might be needed.
- **Consider allowing employees to work from home.** If working from home is an option, plan ahead to make sure staff will have access to the software and systems that they will need to do their jobs.
- **Can your internal email system be accessed from an outside site?** What about customer records and other vital information? If not, consider backing up vital records regularly to an outside location. If records are backed up to a server on your site, you may want to consider an alternate back up site anyway, just in case your building is damaged.

☐ **Consider risk when choosing a new business location.**

- **Moving to a new location is a great opportunity to protect your business from future disasters.** Find out whether prospective sites are in the floodplain by calling your local Planning or Emergency Management office. Ask your realtor to find out if the building has ever been affected by disaster before.
- If you are leasing, make sure the lease clearly states who is responsible for damage to the building and for providing insurance. If there is flood insurance on the building, find out if it covers contents as well as for the building itself.
- **If the lease binds you to the property even when damaged, don't sign.** Make sure you can be released from the lease if the building is damaged, or if an important adjoining business property (which operates as a magnet) is not repaired with a specified time period (30, 60, or 90 days).
- **When building a new facility or renovating an old one, consider using flood, storm, earthquake and fire-resistant materials as needed based upon your business impact analysis (BIA) risk assessment.** Make sure your buildings meet or exceed local building codes for wind resistance. Your investment will pay off in prevented losses in a disaster.