do 1 thing/BUSINESS

SMALL STEPS TOWARD PREPARING YOUR BUSINESS FOR EMERGENCIES

Step 7: Communication

THE GOAL: Develop strategies to communicate employees, suppliers, and customers during an emergency.

Your business relies on good communication during normal operations. Communication is even more critical during a disaster or emergency. You must be able to get information about the event and to share information with staff, customers, and suppliers. Look at the ways that you communicate on a day to day basis and find ways to ensure that you can continue to communicate effectively when your business is affected by disaster.

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

☐ **Determine what events might cause communication systems to fail, and take steps to minimize risk.**

☐ **Ensure redundant systems are in place for key communication systems.**

☐ **Create a communication plan that will allow you to reach your employees, suppliers, and key customers in the event of a disaster.**

If your community uses a reverse-911 type emergency notification system, it may only contact landlines. You may need to register other phone numbers, including VOIP phones, with the provider. Contact your county sheriff's department or local emergency management to find out.

THE MISSION OF DO 1 THING IS TO MOVE INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES TO PREPARE FOR ALL HAZARDS AND BECOME DISASTER RESILIENT

do 1 thing.com/business

27

☐ Determine what events might cause communication systems to fail, and take steps to minimize risk.

On a day to day basis members of your organization communicates internally, between departments, and between management and employees; and externally, with customers, suppliers and others. You may communicate by phone, fax, email, mail, social media, through your website, or face to face.

UTILIZING THE INFORMATION FROM YOUR BUSINESS IMPACT ANALYSIS (BIA) FROM MONTH 1, RISK ASSESSMENT, EVALUATE HOW:

- Each hazard could affect your normal means of communication.
- Estimate how long systems could be down if a communication failure occurs.
- Identify alternate modes of communication.

After you have identified alternate modes of communication, write them into your procedures and familiarize your employees with the plan.

☐ Ensure redundant systems are in place for key communication systems.

All businesses reply on phone numbers and/or internet accessibility to operate their business. To ensure continuance of operations, evaluate your communication methods and evaluate back-up systems if a disaster strikes.

COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS TO EVALUATE:

- VoIP phone systems
- Landline
- Cell phones
- Servers
- Internet Accessibility
- Website Accessibility

What redundant systems can you install in place of your current key communication methods?

THE MISSION OF DO 1 THING IS TO MOVE INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES TO PREPARE FOR ALL HAZARDS AND BECOME DISASTER RESILIENT

do 1 thing.com/business

28

Create a communication plan that will allow you to reach your employees, suppliers, and key customers in the event of a disaster.

Now that you have evaluated alternative communication methods, it is important to plan how you will communicate with employees, suppliers and customers if a disaster strikes.

Consider setting up a call-in number for employee updates, or plan to use social media systems to stay in touch after a disaster.

COMMUNICATION METHODS TO EVALUATE:

- Create an employee, supplier and customer contact phone tree and establish a clear path of who needs to call whom.

- Establish an information (incoming only) hotline where company situational awareness information can be assessed by employees, supplier, and/or customers.

- Emailing is easy, but you may not have access at your business during an emergency. Emailing via VPN may be a workable alternative for your organization to communicate with employees, supplier, and/or customers. And the utilization of your company website is an alternative to making company announcements to employees, supplier, and/or customers.

LASTLY, DO NOT FORGET HOW YOU WILL COMMUNICATE WITHIN YOUR FACILITY IF A DISASTER OCCURS:

- If you have an overhead paging system, develop procedures to use it in an emergency. Make sure it reaches all areas of your facility. If you choose to use emergency codes instead of giving information directly, keep them simple.

- Consider having two-way radios (FRS radios can be a relatively inexpensive option) that can be used to communicate emergency information to people in your facility.

Once you have developed your communication plan, train your employees on the various methods of communication. Include your communication plan in your formal emergency response plan.

do1thing.com/business

THE MISSION OF DO 1 THING IS TO MOVE INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES TO PREPARE FOR ALL HAZARDS AND BECOME DISASTER RESILIENT

do 1 thing.com/business

29