

# do **1** thing/BUSINESS

SMALL STEPS TOWARD PREPARING YOUR BUSINESS FOR EMERGENCIES

## Step 10: Emergency Plans



**THE GOAL:** Create emergency and continuity plans that will guide your employees and your business through disaster.

*Disasters and emergencies are low-frequency, high-stakes events. Because they don't happen every day it's easy to postpone planning for them. Unfortunately, failure to plan can result in financial loss, injury, and death when emergencies do occur. Planning doesn't have to take a lot of time or resources. Investing a few hours now can save money and even lives later on.*

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

- ☐ **Create emergency plans for your building.**
- ☐ **Create contingency plans for your business.**
- ☐ **Formalize your emergency plan.**

Creating any plan is only the first step. Make sure your staff knows the plan. For emergency plans, which may not get used right away, it's especially important to provide training and testing for the people who will be implementing it when the time comes.

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## ☐ **Create emergency plans for your building.**

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Building emergency plans are safety plans for specific facilities. These include evacuation plans for fire and other emergencies, shelter plans for tornadoes or hazardous materials releases, etc.

### **CONSIDER CREATING PLANS FOR THE FOLLOWING:**

- **Evacuation**—What is the best route for employees and customers get out of the building? Consider designating an assembly spot outside of the building, at least 100 feet away, where employees can meet and make sure everyone is accounted for.
- **Accountability Systems**—How will you know who is in your building if you have to evacuate? Do you have the means of identifying what employees, customers or visitors are in the facility at any time? An accountability system can help you ensure that everyone has gotten out safely in an emergency.
- **Shelter In Place**—Shelter in place is most common in tornado warnings, but could also be required for a hazardous materials release or another event where it is not safe to be outdoors. Designate a shelter in place location that is big enough for everyone in the building to wait comfortably for at least 45 minutes.
- **Fire**—Evacuation is one part of a fire plan. If you have an evacuation route map posted, consider adding fire extinguisher locations. Also add information about fire doors and fire safe areas. Make sure that everyone knows not to use elevators in a fire. Talk to your local Fire Marshal about potential areas of refuge where people with disabilities who cannot evacuate because of stairs or other barriers, can safely wait for fire personnel to arrive.
- **Emergency Evacuation Team/CERT Team**—Consider training staff members as a Community Emergency Response Team. This 20 hour training can equip your personnel to respond to emergencies and safely implement emergency plans. Visit <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/> to find more information about CERT training in your area.

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Include employees in the planning process. It's especially important to include employees with disabilities in planning for evacuation and areas of refuge. They will be able to offer valuable insight.

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## ☐ **Create contingency plans for your business.**

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Contingency plans are “what-if” plans. What if a major supplier is shut down? What if you experience an extended power outage? What if another essential service you count on is lost? If you have been following Do 1 Thing Business each month, you may have already done some contingency planning.

A contingency plan is a “what-if” plan. By thinking through the possibilities now, you make it easier to make good decisions when something goes wrong.

### **SOME CONTINGENCIES TO CONSIDER ARE:**

- What if you had to operate with less staff?
  - What if your key supplier or major customer shut down?
  - What if your building is inside a chemical release zone and has to stay empty for days?
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Create a planning team of key staff members to talk through these and other “what-if” questions. Rank them by probability and severity. Are they low or high-frequency events? Are they low or high-impact when they do occur? High-frequency/high-impact events should be your priority for contingency planning. After that look at low-frequency/high-impact events.

### **CONTINGENCY PLANS CAN EQUIP YOU TO PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS IN A CHANGING WORLD.**

- Follow a planning process
  - Determine your risks
  - Define essential functions
  - Design a plan
  - Test, train, and exercise the plan
  - Distribute and update the plan
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## ☐ **Formalize your emergency plan.**

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