



BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT: EXTREME WEATHER

Did you know nearly 60% of UK businesses have no plans in place to deal with extreme weather?*. Since 1998, there has been at least one serious flood every year*, so it is important to create a business continuity management plan.

Within your business continuity plan, it is very important to plan ahead for extreme weather, such as heatwaves, periods of drought, floods, storms and winter weather, so that you can become as resilient as possible to the potential impacts.

Having a plan in place can make it a lot easier for businesses maintain their reputation. It is important that the plan is kept up to date so that it can be used effectively during an emergency. Plans ensure that all the information and resources are together in one location so that the necessary actions and assistance can be provided when required.

When planning ahead for extreme weather, it is important to consider:

- Your working practice
- Employees
- Customers
- Suppliers
- The wider community

TOP TIPS FOR BUSINESS CONTINUITY

BEFORE AN EMERGENCY

As part of your business continuity plan, planning ahead is key to being prepared for a potential threat of extreme weather. Recognising and having triggers to activate your plan could allow you more time to protect your business. There are various triggers which can be useful:

- Ensure managers and head office staff are signed up for the Environment Agency's free flood alert and warning service and ensure all staff know what each warning means.
- Keeping up to date with the latest weather forecast updates from the Met Office and various media platforms such as on TV and the radio and follow updates on social media accounts. It is worth having a battery operated radio in case of a power outage.





BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING

When planning ahead for extreme weather events, it may be important to consider the following:

- Ensure that you have appropriate insurance cover for all aspects of your business, for example, building and contents cover, insurance for stock, business interruption, loss of revenue, flood cover etc.
- Set out clear guidelines about 'essential travel' in extreme weather. Have an evacuation plan in place in case extreme weather occurs during work hours and make a note of any vulnerable members of staff who may need special assistance.
- If your premises was damaged or inaccessible, could your business and stock be moved to an alternative premises or function from an unaffected part of the property? Any hazardous equipment or materials should be kept in a safe and secure location on site out of risk of any potential danger from a weather event, such as a flood.

*Statistics take from:

Federation of Small Businesses and Climate Ready at the Environment Agency and Environment Agency: A guide to preparing your business for flooding

- Providing training for more than one member of staff for specific job roles will allow for continuity if an extreme weather event was to occur which caused staff to be absent.
- During periods of extreme weather, computer systems and electrical equipment can get damaged and break. Therefore any electronic files should be backed up regularly on an external hard drive and/or on an online storage system and it is recommended to make hard copies of the most important documents. 
- Ensure work spaces are well ventilated and have air conditioning; this will be useful in periods of extreme hot weather, to prevent servers and electrical equipment overheating, or even to dry out the potential effects of a flood.
- Consider the impact of extreme weather on your supply chain and customers and how any disruption may affect your business.
- Have a flood specific plan in place if you are located in an area at risk of flooding and think about installing property level flood resilience measures to reduce the impacts of a potential flood.
- Promote water efficiency throughout the workplace and to staff and encourage employees to reduce non-essential water use. Also reduce mains water pressure, check your property for any leaks and increase active leakage control. These actions can reduce the demand for water in drought conditions. 

Creating a list of important contacts can be very helpful. It can be used prior to an extreme weather event to help you prepare, during the time of the weather event for advice, support and to easily contact other staff members, suppliers, customers and emergency services and during the aftermath of the weather event to contact your insurance company, customers and suppliers. Having a hard copy of the list ensures that you have access to contact details at all times of the day both on and offsite of the business. This list should include all staff contact details, including emergency contact details and next of kin.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY!

For your business continuity management plan to be effective and successful, communication throughout the workplace to all employees, customers, suppliers and if necessary, the wider community is key. It is essential that:

- The plan is communicated to all members of staff so they can respond efficiently and effectively in an emergency and that sufficient training is provided if required, for example, first aid training.
- The location of the plan is made clear. It would also be a good idea for the business owner and other senior management to have a separate hard copy of the plan both onsite and offsite as well.
- Staff are aware of changes to any policies, such as policy on travelling to work in adverse conditions.
- Before, during or after an emergency, business owners should make use of multiple platforms such as email, social media and phone calls to maintain regular contact with employees, customers, suppliers and staff.