



## **Disaster Preparedness Tips for Small Business**

When disaster strikes most small businesses are caught unprepared. To avoid becoming a statistic, here are 7 simple ways you can prepare ahead of time for contingencies – and help your business being more efficient.

### **Take a break from computers**

Even if your company is highly dependent on computers, you should make sure you can still continue to live without them in case of emergency, or even an extended electrical outage.

After hurricane Katrina, a New Orleans area bank instituted and exercise in which every six months, tellers were required to forego computers and do their work manually. That way, even without electricity they could still serve their customers.

### **Allow telecommuting**

If you set up your computer systems to allow employees to work from home periodically, whether by installing special software on their home computers or issuing them laptops, then can keep working even if they can't get into the office. Surveys suggest that offering telecommuting options also helps employee retention.

### **Set up secondary work locations**

In case one of your facilities is out of commission, assign workers to report to facilities closer to their homes. Consider making arrangements with other companies in different regions to give your employees a temporary place to work, whether in a conference room, warehouse or branch office, and make the same offer to them.

### **Cross train employees**

After a disaster, not every employee will be able to get to the office. By cross training employees on secondary or related responsibilities, you have a better chance of having employees on hand who can handle important tasks. Employees also appreciated the added insight and education beyond their primary role.

### **Strive for simplicity**

Analyze your current procedures to see if they are simple enough for someone to pick up with little preparation.

### **Prepare for sleepovers**

If your employees are stranded at work, make sure it's comfortable for them. Store rudimentary equipment for cooking and sleeping, along with first aid supplies. Installing a shower will give employees a place to freshen up.

**Stay informed**

Watch television, listens to radio and browse websites to keep you up to date and informed on natural disasters. Resources on this subject are available at: [www.disastersafety.org](http://www.disastersafety.org) and [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).

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