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### Disaster Preparedness/Disaster Recovery TIP SHEET from [www.readinets.com](http://www.readinets.com)

Every business must have a disaster plan in place. This plan must be detailed, outlining all necessary operations and assigning responsibility for implementing each of those operations prior to, during, and after a disaster.

- Identifying, in advance, a safe location from which to operate in the event of a disaster is critical to ensuring business continuity.
- Hurricane Katrina demonstrated clearly the need to ensure that employees can be contacted if a natural or man-made disaster necessitates evacuation. After Katrina, many New Orleans businesses could not locate employees for weeks or even months; this contributed to the high rate of business failures. Make a plan that includes a way to contact each employee in the case of a long-term evacuation.
- Businesses must publicize an offsite call-in number, email address, and business location to be used if the office is damaged and abandoned.
- Businesses must make arrangements for off-site data storage and save backup data daily. For small businesses, online, automatic backup services can be cost-effective solutions. Such data as tax returns, bank statements, and other important documents should be duplicated and stored in another location, at least 200 miles from the office.
- Businesses with multiple locations must maintain a redundant backup system to store data off-site.
- Important contact information should be stored and secured off-site, so that it is accessible for remote locations after a disaster.
- Planning must extend beyond the response and short-term recovery periods.
- A plan must be developed to assign responsibilities and tasks to top management to ensure that all operations are secured and the business remains active, even from a new location.
- In planning for business continuity, businesses must include programs for helping their *employees* recover from a disaster. Employees may need assistance restoring their dwellings or finding new ones, as well as rebuilding the business networks that support their performance.
- Employees are also likely to need assistance dealing with the emotional effects of the event. Rates of depression in New Orleans remained double the pre-Katrina levels 18 months after the storm. Such long-term psychological effects can result in decreased employee productivity and increased absenteeism and turnover, as well as increased health costs.
- Getting sufficient support from social networks can play a key role in combating those effects. In our study of Jefferson and Orleans Parishes after Katrina, we found that more than one-quarter of respondents who said they had enough people to help them “only some of the time” exhibited a high level of depression. But among people who said they had enough people to help them “all of the time,” less than 4% reported a high level of depression.
- Disaster plans must be practiced. Employee participation is critical, to ensure that employees gain confidence that the business can survive any disaster.
- Plan, Plan, Plan – Implement, Implement, Implement and Review, Review and Review.
- The Readinets model is to PUT a plan in place: Plan, Update, and Test.

**For additional information on disaster preparedness, please see:**

**Additional resources**

Hurricane Preparedness for Business – A Five Part Series

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,196312,00.html> - Part 1: Disaster Recovery Planning

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,196541,00.html> - Part 2: Protecting Your People

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,196709,00.html> - Part 3: Protecting Your Data

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,196849,00.html> - Part 4: Investing in Disaster Planning

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,197052,00.html> - Part 5: How to Create a Disaster

Recovery Plan