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Would Bedfordshire Businesses Survive Disaster?

Two thirds of Bedfordshire businesses have no plan in place should they suffer a major catastrophe like fire, flooding or severe weather, research released by the Bedfordshire and Luton Local Resilience Forum (BLLRF) has found. This means their competitors could profit from their problems if disaster struck. However creating a plan is simple and quick and would help local companies to keep in business and protect jobs.

BLLRF brings together Police, Fire, Ambulance, local councils, health and government agencies, representatives of Bedfordshire businesses and risk and resilience consultants to prepare and plan for disasters and to help businesses think about the unthinkable before it happens.

“One in five Bedfordshire businesses could be affected by a major disruption such as fire, flood or as the recent horse meat scandal has shown, a problem in their supply chain,” explains Area Commander Tony Rogers, of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. Tony, who heads BLLRF’s Business Continuity Awareness Working Group went on: “But two thirds don’t have any plan to get them back in business and half of businesses affected by a major disaster with no recovery plan will be bankrupt within the following 12 months. This could be a major blow to the local economy, local employment and local services.

Chief Superintendent Mike Colbourne, Chair of BLLRF’s Executive added: “Business Continuity Management (BCM) is about planning a business’ return to normal as quickly and painlessly as possible in the event of a major disruption. Whether it’s a small business or an international company, managers should have already put aside the information they need to keep their businesses running in case of flood, fire or criminal activity.

“Being prepared makes good business sense - if your business suffers from a disaster your competitors will be ready to take over your customers and your business. You should also think about your customers – what will happen to them if you can’t supply them with your services?

“Nowadays it’s vital to have important data backed up and available should a place of business be damaged or destroyed by fire or flood. It’s also important to plan for severe weather – what happens if your staff can’t get to work or your suppliers can’t deliver? Local business people owe it to their staff, their

customers and their community to start thinking about what they would do if disaster struck.”

Completing the [business continuity survey](#) will help BLLRF plan for emergencies and taking this [ten minute test](#) will show you business whether it is ready to cope with disaster if it strikes.

Why not follow BLLRF on twitter: [#BCAW201](#) and [#BusWWYDI](#) or visit BLLRF's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/whatwouldyoudoif

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Hotlinks to the Business Continuity Survey have been included above, the full URL is: www.bllrf.org.uk/content/?id=214

Below are some top tips to include in a feature article and further information on how a business can set up its own Business Continuity Plan. Further resources and help are available on the BLLRF website at www.bllrf.org.uk/home/

BLLRF's Ten Business Tips To Survive Disaster

What would you do if disaster struck? Think about having these in place just in case:

1. Evacuation and relocation plan
2. List of key contacts', like suppliers, telephone numbers/email addresses
3. List of all employees' home and mobile telephone numbers
4. Vital computer data backed up in the Cloud, on disks or hard copies offsite
5. Sufficient insurance cover for losses and restoring your business
6. Staff who know where to find mains switches and valves (i.e. for electricity, gas and water) and regular heating, plumbing and air conditioning checks
7. Emergency packs ready including spare keys, building site plan etc
8. Inventory of your equipment, materials, products and other assets
9. Details where to hire or replace IT and other vital equipment suppliers and finally:
10. Ensure those you depend upon for supplies and support are also resilient to disaster

Is your business disaster ready – complete this quick and simple survey to find out [here](#).

How To Create Your Own Business Continuity Plan

You don't need a big team of people to plan your response to, and recovery from, a crisis - these ideas will work for both small and medium sized organisations.

Firstly find someone in your business who is happy to become responsible and accountable for saving your organisation through creating and managing a Response and Recovery Plan to maintain your business continuity. Ensure your senior management actively supports them and their work by agreeing a clear policy and objectives. Set targets for the planning process and task them to report back to senior management about progress regularly so you can measure your achievements.

Planning for your business survival should begin by assessing potential risks like fire, flood, severe weather or the effect of a contagious illness such as norovirus. Be clear about your legal and regulatory commitments and make certain they are followed - the recent horsemeat scandal shows that your suppliers could be a fatal weakness to your business. Understand who you depend upon to make your business work both inside and outside your organisation, record their emergency contact information and what you'd expect from them and when, and what they will expect from you. Check they take business continuity planning serious too, don't allow them to let you down in times of crisis.

Nominate preferably more than one person to be responsible for the effective communication of key information during a crisis to everyone who needs it. This will be your decision-makers, emergency services, staff, customers and your supply chain. Create an emergency media plan in case your problems attract attention and include social media in this – the recent problems of the cruise ship Carnival Triumph were tweeted and emailed worldwide.

Think about what information your Response and Recovery Plan should contain, for example:

- 1. Evacuation and relocation details*
- 2. Key contact numbers (work, mobile and home) and emails*
- 3. Access to critical data back ups*
- 4. Key insurance contacts and policy detail*
- 5. An employee skills matrix for essential recovery actions*
- 6. Emergency packs including spare keys, building site plan etc,*
- 7. Asset register for all equipment, materials, products, and contacts for alternate equipment suppliers if needed*
- 8. Potential relocation sites.*

Agree with your critical suppliers a mutual support plan to help each other in times of need and create a common approach to continuity planning so you can easily support each other when required.

Finally ensure your plan is fit for purpose by checking it at least twice a year by simulating a possible crisis and testing your response and recovery, include your suppliers in this. When you are done don't sit back and let the plan gather dust, schedule in an annual review to make sure it develops with your business and remains effective year on year.

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