

TECHNICAL INFORMATION PAPER SERIES: PREPARING FOR FLOODS



DON'T WAIT FOR RISING WATERS. PREPARE NOW TO HELP PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS FROM FLOODING

Floods can cause devastating damage. If your facility is located in a flood plain area or is prone to flooding, take steps to mitigate damage. If there is probability that your facility will be affected, initiate flood-proofing techniques and preparedness procedures.

Flood risk, including both its likelihood and severity components, has proved to be very difficult to quantify with certainty. General climactic fluctuations, natural and man-made changing flood plains and watersheds, as well as area development have all contributed to some level of uncertainty. You should always seek to educate yourself on your specific flood risk, which will, ultimately, inform your decisions about preparedness and continuity. Consultants and government agencies may be engaged to help bring clarity to site risks.

ABOUT FLOOD WARNINGS

A **flash flood watch** is issued when flash flooding is possible in the area. This is a time to put essential personnel on alert and to assess the exposure and the probability it will affect the facility.

A **flash flood warning** is issued when a flash flood is reported or is imminent. Essential personnel should be initiating flood-proofing controls if the exposure warrants this action.

A **flood warning** is an advance notice that a flood is imminent; this warning will be issued as the flood progresses along the river or stream. On major rivers, flood warnings may be issued several days in advance. The warning will include information about the expected rise in the river's water level, as well as when and where the flooding is expected.

The following list is designed to help you prioritize business continuity management procedures. These procedures, which may help you limit damage to your property and business, can be incorporated directly into your business continuity management plan.

continued



BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT: BEFORE THE FLOOD

- Establish a Business Continuity Management (BCM) Plan that takes prevention, emergency response and disaster recovery into consideration. If a BCM plan is already in place, review and update it as needed for flood readiness.
- Designate a BCM coordinator and a BCM team. Assign responsibility to specific employees for advance arrangements and flood emergency response, including removal of stock and equipment.
- Practice your evacuation plan. Ensure that all employees know the safest route to high, safe ground.
- Participate in flood plain management. Many communities have programs of preventive and corrective measures for reducing future flood damage. These measures include zoning, subdivision, building requirements, or special-purpose flood plain ordinances. Understand that minor changes made in off location areas may impact your location.
- Keep a list of all vendors' and key customers' telephone numbers and other important contact information available and secured.
- Keep an accurate list of equipment indicating a priority to help restoration of activities.
- Keep insurance information and contact names and numbers in a safe place. This information will expedite the claim process in the event of a loss.
- Try to control the flow and direction of water around critical areas of your operation. Direct water underground or to areas away from the building. Your local flood control district, government association, or contractor can provide assistance with erecting retaining walls and diverting water flow. In some cases on-site grading can be improved to limit some risk to the building and operations.
- Install a sump pump; have a backup available in case the main pump fails. You should always have spare pumping means for more severe scenarios.
- Make sure window wells at ground level are watertight. Window covers that can be bolted in place are most effective in keeping water out.



- Keep emergency equipment (such as portable radios and flashlights) in working order. Portable, battery-powered radios are essential in an emergency. Tune in to local stations and follow emergency instructions.
- Keep materials on hand that will help prevent water damage. Materials such as sandbags, plywood, plastic sheeting, and lumber can be used to protect property.
- Do not pile sandbags too close to the walls of the building. Wet bags can exert excess pressure on the foundation, resulting in significant structural damage.
- Retain a trusted contractor that will be able to make your restoration a priority following any flood mishap.
- Discuss additional beneficial mitigation means with your insurance and/or contractor consultants.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT: DURING THE FLOOD

- Move valuable papers and other contents to higher elevations or remove them from the premises altogether. You may find significant benefit in scanning old physical documents to electronic formats and saving them on remote servers along with other company documents.
- Back up computer files to a reliable off premises location.
- Remove all significant storage of chemical paints, oils, cleaners, flammable liquids, etc. from the premises. Doing this will not only prevent them from causing damage to the rest of the facility, but will also safeguard the health of the individuals involved in clean-up operations.

- Bring outdoor possessions inside, or tie them down securely, to keep them from being washed away.
- Anticipate the possible impact upon suppliers and customers. Make arrangements for routing inventory and deliveries to another facility until flood waters have subsided. Stock up on high-demand items if suppliers are also susceptible to flood damage, because delivery schedules may be disrupted.
- Turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve if evacuation is imminent. Do not touch electrical equipment.
- Remove electrical motors and control panels from large equipment that cannot be moved, following prescribed removal procedures and electrical safety techniques.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT: AFTER THE FLOOD

- Secure the site to prevent unauthorized and unsafe access. There are a myriad of concealed risks that may cause significant injuries or exacerbated on-site damages.
- Before entering the building, check for structural damage.
- Watch for wildlife that may have chosen the structure as a refuge to escape the flood waters.
- Determine that all electrical hazards are controlled.
- Drain and clean basements. After the flood waters have subsided, begin draining the basement in stages, about a third of the water volume each day. Pumping out water too quickly may cause structural damage. If this is not intuitive, you should engage a professional to help with this important step.
- Clean damaged property. Flood waters may have transported sewage and other hazardous materials.
- Document the damage. Images and short videos provide an excellent opportunity to record damages.
- Begin salvage operations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Ready.gov (DHS): <https://www.ready.gov/floods>

FEMA: <https://www.floodsmart.gov/why/all-about-flood-maps>

IBHS Disaster Safety: <https://disastersafety.org/flood/>

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