



Business Continuity In Suffolk



What is 'Business Continuity'?

Business Continuity is the process that an organisation puts into place to ensure that essential activities can continue during a disaster and get back to a normal level of operation as quickly as possible.

Business continuity planning is considerably more widespread in larger organisations, with a serious gap in small to medium sized enterprises. Unfortunately it is the smaller organisations who struggle to recover and continue trading after major disasters, so it is those who really need to use the information in this guide.

How can we help?

The Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit (JEPU), via its website, can help direct you to resources and organisations who can offer specialist help in business continuity.

<http://www.suffolkresilience.com/business-continuity/>

A simple plan in place within your organisation will go a long way to being prepared. There are 5 basic steps which organisations should follow when putting together a business continuity plan (a template is provided on the website).

Your Step-By-Step Guide To Business Continuity

1. Analyse your organisation
What bits are important?
2. Assess the risks
What might go wrong?
3. Develop a strategy
What is your approach?
4. Develop your plan
What would you do on the day?
5. Rehearse the plan
Making sure it works



Note – if you are a provider of social care services in Suffolk, a specific guide is provided on the website.



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Step 1. Analyse Your Organisation

In order to develop a Business Continuity Plan you need to have a thorough understanding of your organisation. This involves :

- Knowing your critical activities, the effect of those activities being disrupted and the priority for recovery of those activities.
- Knowing what events could disrupt your critical activities and lead to a failure of your organisation.

This process is known as a Business Impact Analysis, it is in the BC Plan Template.

Examples of Critical Activities are:

- Sales
- Goods in
- Manufacturing
- Distribution
- Marketing
- Staff Wages
- Taking calls



You should consider the impact of each critical activity on the survival of your organisation and how quickly each activity must be re-established. Typical categories of impact are: Low, Medium, High and Catastrophic. Typical time spans for re-establishing activities are: 24 hours, 2 – 3 days, up to 1 week, 1 – 2 weeks and more than 2 weeks. For example, disruption to the sales activity could have a high impact, such as:

First 24 hrs

- Unhappy customers

2 – 3 days

- Loss of customers to competitors
- Cash flow problems

Up to one week

- Unable to pay staff and/or suppliers

1 – 2 weeks

- Write-off of unsold stock

Over 2 weeks

- Serious financial problems
- Loss of reputation



We recommend that having done this exercise, you list your critical activities in priority order. A matrix is provided in the template for this.

For each critical activity, you should now list the resources required for recovery:

- The number of staff needed and any particular individuals or skills or knowledge.
- The amount of building space required for the operation.
- Any particular building that your critical activities could be relocated to.
- Any particular plant, equipment and materials required.
- Any particular information, data or IT required.
- Key external organisations you may depend on such as suppliers.



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Step 2. Assess The Risks

The list below includes typical hazards that may effect the operation of your organisation. You need to assess the level of risk associated with each one, risk assessment includes both the likelihood of the threat happening and the impact it could have.

- Fire.
- Loss of key personnel.
- Loss or denial of access to your premises.
- Floods and severe weather.
- Computer failure or loss of data.
- Fuel crisis.
- Bomb threat.
- Loss of utilities (e.g. power, water, gas or phones).
- Failure of critical suppliers.



Likelihood can be assessed as follows.

- F = Very High (1 year);
- E = High (5 years);
- D = Significant (10 years);
- C = Low (25 years);
- B = Very Low (50 years);
- A = Negligible (100 years)

Impact can be assessed as follows:

- 4 = Catastrophic
- 3 = Critical
- 2 = Marginal
- 1 = Negligible

When assessing likelihood and impact, you should consider:

- Has it happened before.
- What would be the disruption.
- What is being or has been done to prevent it happening.
- What do your staff think.

By plotting the threats on the risk matrix in the template, you can prioritise your actions in the next stage.

A Worked Example

For a retail business in the high street in Hadleigh, two threats that might be identified are flooding of the premises and a bomb exploding.

Both would have a critical impact on the business (score 3), but as the Hadleigh high street is located in the flood plain of the River Brett, there is a much higher likelihood of flooding (score D) than a bomb exploding (score B).

When plotted on the risk matrix, it is clear that the risk of flooding should be planned for before the risk of a bomb exploding.



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Step 3. Develop A Strategy

For each risk identified in Step 2, you need to decide on your basic approach or strategy. You have 5 options:

1. Do nothing, i.e. accept the risk.
2. Take out insurance.
3. Stop the activity and transfer it elsewhere, often called "outsourcing".
4. Reduce the risk by taking action to prevent it happening or lessening its impact.
5. Prepare a Business Continuity Plan.

You may choose one or a combination of these 5 options. You should give thought to each one, your choice is likely to depend on:

- How prepared you are to accept levels of risk, this varies from person to person.
- Your current or expected financial position and your ability to afford higher insurance costs.
- The opportunities available to "transfer" critical activities.
- The opportunities available to and the costs of mitigating the threats by taking further control measures.

For many organisations (especially small to medium sized ones), there is very little that can be done and insurance is too costly. This is where you need a Business Continuity Plan (Step 4).

Some other points...

Back up data regularly and store copies off site in a secure place. Low cost back up options include CD writers or DAT tape recorders. Practise restoring the data in an IT system outside your own to ensure it works.

Ensure that important paper documents, such as contracts and employee information, are protected. Make copies and use fire resistant and waterproof storage containers.

Be clear about what your insurance policies cover and what they don't so that there are no nasty surprises when you subsequently make a claim. Keep copies of the relevant policies off site so that you know immediately what to do in the event of an incident. Review your insurance cover regularly to ensure it keeps pace with any changes in the business.

Have an emergency pack (sometimes called a grab-bag) which may include your Business Continuity Plan, as well as a first aid kit and a mobile telephone.

Check you have an evacuation procedure for the premises in which your organisation is located.



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Step 4. Develop Your Plan

The purpose of your Business Continuity Plan is to ensure that your organisation's critical activities can continue during a disaster and can get back to a normal level of operation as quickly as possible.

Your plan should be flexible enough to be useful in whatever event may happen, but should be detailed enough to safeguard the top priority critical activities identified in Step 1 and meet the highest risk threats identified in Step 2.

We recommend you consider the following items and use the Incident Management Plan part of the template provided.

1. Respond to the immediate incident appropriately, by invoking this plan (either during normal working hours or out of hours). Contact the Emergency Services and follow their instructions. Take any immediate action to help injured people such as staff, customers, the general public and contractors.

2. Form an Incident Management Team to handle the crisis.

3. Use the log template provided to assess the damage to your organisation.

- The number of staff injured or unavailable.
- Damage to property, premises or building.
- Damage to plant, equipment, vehicles or stock.

Take any immediate action to secure your property, for example any cash on site.

4. Identify which critical activities will be disrupted by the damage caused. Remember – these you listed in the Business Impact Assessment.

5. Contact those people who will be able to help you recover these critical activities.

For example:

- Staff not effected by the event.
- Your manager or the HQ of the organisation.
- Your insurer.
- Suppliers, contractors or other business partners.

Note – you may need to inform people if an off-site meeting location is to be used.

6. Action Plan

There are two ways to write this...

6.1 Time Based

Set the actions required to recover the critical activities disrupted that you need to take over the next: 24 hours, 2 – 3 days, up to 1 week, 1 – 2 weeks and more than 2 weeks. Remember – in your Business Impact Assessment (step 1) you listed...

- The number of staff needed and any particular individuals or skills or knowledge.
- The amount of building space required for the operation.
- Any particular building that your critical activities could be relocated to.
- Any particular plant, equipment and materials required.
- Any particular information, data or IT required.
- Key external organisations you may depend on such as suppliers.

6.1 Threat Based

Set the actions required to recover the critical activities disrupted that you need to take in relation to the incident that has occurred.

- Loss of premises – set out the alternative locations available.
- Loss of staff – identify where replacement staff may be sourced.
- Loss of utilities – identify what actions should be taken in the event of no power, water or gas.
- Loss of IT – describe how staff should use manual paper based alternatives.

Remember – to cover all the threats you identified in the Business Impact Assessment.

7. Communicate

Firstly, it is essential to keep your staff informed regarding the emergency and the response actions being taken. Staff may be concerned about:

- Colleagues who may be injured.
- What is expected of them today.
- Should they turn up for work tomorrow.
- Will there still be a job for them if the building has gone up in smoke, etc.

Consider issuing a help-line number for staff to call in on or, depending on the scale and type of emergency, tannoy announcement, email, intranet, poster in reception area / canteen, local radio or phone call to all staff.

Remember – providing information quickly will stop rumours!

Secondly, the same principles apply to organisations you depend on and depend you.

Thirdly (and by no means least), you should consider telling your customers as much as you can, even if all you can do is put a sign up in the shop window.

You might also need to appoint a member of your staff to act as a liaison officer to liaise with; emergency services, other staff, customers, suppliers, support organisations, the media and any other organisations caught up in the event.

Note – The website provides templates for:

- A Business Continuity Plan
- A Business Continuity Plan for Office Buildings
- A Business Continuity Plan for Social Care Settings



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Step 5. Testing Your Plan

It is important that, once your plan is written, you test the procedures you have put in place. Before a plan can be tested, staff need to be familiar with the content of the plan and their role in the response and recovery. This can be done by reading through the plan together and discussing how you would apply it to a fictional scenario.

When you are confident that your staff understand the plan and their part in it, you should test the plan by acting out a scenario – this is called an Emergency Exercise. There are three ways you can do this:

1. Desk-top or paper-based exercise

A team of staff is given a scenario based on one of the risks identified in Step 2 in the form of a short written brief. They then work through the actions they would take by reading the Business Continuity Plan, keeping a log of their decisions. Only the staff in the exercise team are involved. This is then reviewed for effectiveness.

2. Telephone cascading

This is the same as above, but the exercise is widened to allow the calling up of all those people and organisations identified in the plan who would assist in a crisis situation. This allows you to test the communication structure in your plan, identify if there are people on your list who may have left the company, check the numbers held are up to date and measure how long it takes to pass the correct information to the correct people.

3. Full rehearsal

This is where a real event is “mimicked” in real time at a real location involving a range of staff, customers and external organisations. This requires a lot of organisation and preparation, it is also best to spring these as surprises.

If the plan is tested in similar conditions to a real incident, this will show how the different parts of the plan fit and work together. This can be an expensive option, but the effort and cost will pay off if the plan has to be put into action for real.