



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 on this site.

How can we help?

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

Your Step-By-Step Guide To Business Continuity

Select each one of the links below to work through the process:

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





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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, a template is provided.

Examples of Critical Activities are:

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



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:

- Unhappy customers
- Loss of customers to competitors
- Cash flow problems
- Unable to pay staff and/or suppliers
- Write-off of unsold stock
- Serious financial problems
- Loss of reputation



We recommend that having done this exercise, you 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 affect 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 telephone)
- Failure of critical suppliers.



Likelihood can be assessed as follows.

- 5 = Almost certain (1 year);
- 4 = Very likely (5 years);
- 3 = Likely (10 years);
- 2 = Unlikely (50 years);
- 1 = Rare (100 years)

Impact can be assessed as follows:

- 5 = Catastrophic
- 4 = Major
- 3 = Significant
- 2 = Minor
- 1 = Insignificant

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 for (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...

Check your vulnerability to flooding by going to the Environment Agency website. Sign up to flood warnings if necessary.

Check utility websites to see what they offer businesses in terms of real time outage information.

Back up data regularly and store copies off site in a secure place. Low cost back up options include laptops and memory sticks. 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 phone.

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

Investigate what commercial companies can offer in terms of work area and IT recovery.



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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 template provided.

1. Incident Management

In other words, how prevent the drama becoming a crisis.

1.1. Contact the Emergency Services and follow their instructions.

1.2. Take any immediate action to help injured people such as staff, customers, the general public and contractors.

1.3. Assess the damage to your organisation.

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

Take any immediate action to secure your property, e.g. any cash you may have on site.

1.4. Identify which critical activities will be disrupted by the damage caused.

1.5. Contact those people who will be able to help you recover these critical activities, form a team to manage the incident. For example:

- Your manager or the proprietor of the organisation.
- Staff not effected by the event.
- Staff with expert knowledge (Operations, IT, Finance, Communications, HR).
- Your insurer.
- Your county or borough emergency planning or business continuity unit.
- Suppliers, contractors or other business partners.
- Trade associations and support organisations such as Chamber Of Commerce.

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

2. Roles & Responsibilities

You won't be able to do everything yourself, delegate certain tasks. For example...

- Talking to emergency services, local authorities, landlords, insurers etc.
- Looking after the welfare of staff.
- Contacting customers.
- Contacting critical suppliers or other partners.
- Safeguarding the site and salvaging plant, material etc. from the site.
- Taking action to recover critical activities as shown in the next part of the plan.
- Handling any media or press interest.

3. Action Plan

Now set out the actions required to recover the critical activities that you need to take over the next: 24 hours, 2 – 3 days, 1 week, 1 – 2 weeks and > 2 weeks.

Actions include many things...

- Contingencies (alternative sites, suppliers, staff agencies etc.).
- Workarounds (different ways of working).
- Scaling down or stopping non critical activities.

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.

There are basically two ways of setting all this out in your plan; either by timescale (i.e. what must be done within 24 hours) or by threat (i.e. what you must do if you lose access to your work premises). The two different options are shown in the template.

4. Communicate

Once you have decided what action to take, it is important to let everyone know.

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, 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.

If your customers know you are doing your best to keep your business going, they will stay loyal.

Thirdly, the same principle applies to organisations you depend on, your suppliers and contractors.

A proforma for a communications plan is provided in the business continuity plan template. This includes space to record critical internal and external contact details.

Finally, as an appendix, provide a blank incident log for recording your actions. This helps manage the incident and may be important in case there are any enquiries after the event.



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Step 5. Testing Your Plan

It is important that, once your plan is written, you test it. 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. Walk-through

The easiest and quickest way to test a plan. The author and owner of the plan (plus a few other key players) read through the plan and debate the various strengths and weaknesses. This can be expanded to include practical steps, such as visiting an alternative site.

2. Table-top or paper-based exercise

All staff who have a role to play in the plan are given a scenario based on one of the risks identified in Step 2 in the form of a short written brief. Together, they then work through the actions they would take, keeping a log of their decisions. They can contact others inside or outside the business to shape their decisions. Those decisions can then be challenged by inserting “injects”. The business continuity plan is then reviewed for effectiveness and updated.

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. It may require some people acting roles in order to make it feel realistic. This requires a lot of organisation and preparation, it is also best to spring these as “no notice” 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.