

PREPAREDNESS TIPS FOR BUSINESSES

#1 Update your staff emergency contact lists

In the lead up to New Zealand Shakeout, our national earthquake drill, now is a good time to make sure your contact lists are up to date.

- You need to be able to contact your staff when a crisis happens – to check-in with them to see if they are OK, coordinate, and keep your business running.
- Remember that you need to have contact information for a range of circumstances. What if the mobile phone network is down or if people's cellphones are left in evacuated buildings? You also need to consider emergency contacts – who to contact if a staff member is hurt at work? Include alternative phone numbers and methods for reaching people (emails, home address and phone numbers) with your contact information.
- Contact lists also need to be kept in multiple formats, both electronic and paper. Ideally, electronic copies should be backed up in the cloud to ease access if your phone or work computer is unavailable.
- For an easy to use template to record contact details (and more!) see Page5 of the Get Prepared Business Continuity Plan.

#2 Connect with critical suppliers and customers

Now that you have checked that your contact lists are up to date, you need to consider who else you might need to connect with in an emergency.

- Think about who your key suppliers and customers are. Communicating with both suppliers and customers may help to preserve those relationships through the period of disruption.
- Get in touch with your top 5 suppliers, customers or a mix of the two (even if they are not in New Zealand). Learn how to contact them if their primary phone or email goes down. Find out who to contact if your usual person is unavailable.
- While you are talking to them, why not suggest they sign up for Shakeout as well. See: www.shakeout.govt.nz/register/index.php

#3 Back-up your data and make a plan.

Could you retrieve all of your important data in an emergency? Now is a good time to review and ensure that important data is backed up and accessible from other locations. Be clear about what data is critical to your organisation – this might include written and electronic information.

This week answer these questions:

- Are the contacts on your mobile phone stored elsewhere?
- Do you know how to go about restoring data? If not, trialling the process would be a good way to iron out any knowledge gaps now.
- What data is important to your organisation that is not in an electronic format?

If you don't have a plan, consider making one. You already have several key components of a plan – emergency contact details and back-up systems for your data! There are lots of great free resources providing templates and advice. You could use any of the following to help you:

- www.getprepared.org.nz/sites/default/files/uploads/Its%20Easy%20Prepared%20Businesses_0.pdf
 - www.getprepared.org.nz/sites/default/files/u75/Prepared%20Businesses%20-%20Electronic%20Document%20v2.pdf
 - www.resilientbusiness.co.nz
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#4 Get your staff to test your plan!

The Canterbury earthquakes highlighted the crucial role of engaged and committed staff for restoring operations in a crisis. How engaged are your staff? Do you involve staff in emergency planning? Have you planned how you will look after your staff during and after a crisis?

This week have a morning tea with staff and give them a series of 'what if' scenarios:

- What if a critical piece of equipment was damaged?
- What if the business premises were inaccessible?

Get staff to discuss what you might do in these scenarios.

Use this to test your Business Continuity Plan. Are these scenarios and outcomes covered in your plan?

For more ideas on how to test your plan, see www.resorgs.org.nz/News/9-easy-ways-to-get-testing-today.html

#5 Plan for the absence of key personnel

Are there 1 or 2 people within your department or organisation that are the linchpins of your ability to operate? If they were injured or unavailable, could you cope?

This week, test out just how dependent you are on key staff. Assign one or two of your valued employees to other duties for half a day (or give them the morning off – they deserve it!) and see how the team copes with the person missing. Why not up the ante and make sure there is an important problem that needs to be fixed or a key decision that needs to be made immediately!

Take time to review how it went and consider what actions might be needed to ensure that your organisation doesn't flounder when key people are absent. These could include cross-training staff, job-sharing, periodic short term job-swaps, decision-delegation authorities and procedural manuals.

Your staff are going to be really important if a disaster strikes. For information on planning for and looking after your people in a disaster see www.resorgs.org.nz/staffed-or-stuffed.html

#6 Check your insurance

Shakeout is a great time to make sure your insurance is in place, you are adequately covered, you can reach your broker in an emergency, and you know what to do if you need to file a claim.

This week:

- Read your policy and make sure it reflects your current business circumstances.
- Contact your broker – make sure you have their emergency contact information.
- Make sure your insurance arrangements are included in your business continuity plan and there is someone on your team assigned to managing your claim.

More information about selecting and getting the most from commercial insurance can be found at www.resorgs.org.nz/cover-your-assets.html

#7 Don't just do an earthquake drill!

Next week is ShakeOut. So, why not use the opportunity to not only test your earthquake drill but some of your other plans.

After practicing Drop, Cover, Hold, get your team together to discuss what would happen next in a real event:

- How would staff get home?
- What would you do if your building was unusable?
- How would you ensure the wellbeing of your people?

Test some of your Business Continuity plans e.g.

- Trial a restore of your data
- Try working without cellphones for a morning
- Try working at home

For more information on what to expect after a disaster, see www.resorgs.org.nz/first-aid-business.html. Keep a copy handy – just in case.

#8 Build your networks

Positive relationships with other organisations in your sector and community can provide valuable support during crises. When the chips are down during a crisis, those that work together tend to come out better off.

Put effort into building stronger relationships with the people with whom you work. Why not use Shakeout as an excuse for an informal get together with the critical people in your network.

In a disaster situation, these relationships may well be what gets you through.

For more information on building a resilient NGO, see www.resorgs.org.nz/resilience-within.html

#9 After ShakeOut - What did you do?

Congratulations on taking part in Shakeout 2015! We hope that our weekly messages have helped you to improve your disaster preparedness!

One of the best ways for businesses to improve their resilience to disasters is to learn from their own and others' experiences. Take a few minutes to tell other businesses what you did in preparation for, and on the day of, ShakeOut at www.shakeout.govt.nz/share. Photos tell a thousand words so add some photos too.

And don't forget to record all your own lessons and update your business continuity and emergency plans as well. Next time might be the real thing!

Find out more

These tips were developed by Resilient Organisations (www.resorgs.org.nz) for New Zealand ShakeOut. Visit their website and download Shut Happens, their guide to making plans and developing practices to make your business more resilient.

For help planning your New Zealand ShakeOut drill, visit www.shakeout.govt.nz/resources or email shakeout@dpmc.govt.nz

