



Before Your Business Continuity Plan

What you can do if your organization doesn't have a BCP,
but you want to prepare for emergencies

We think having a business continuity plan (BCP) is important: we are, after all, BCP consultants. We are often asked if there's anything an organization can do to prepare for emergencies or disasters, even if it doesn't yet have a BCP. Forbes Calamity Prevention (FCP) has prepared this list of actions you can take for little cost and a small amount of time, whether you have a BCP or not.

If you have additional suggestions or questions, we would very much like to receive them, at our office in Singapore (+65 6324-3091) or at info@calamity.com.sg. Our web site address is at the bottom of this page.

1. Appoint a Crisis Management Team (CMT)

The single most effective step you can take is to get senior management of your organization involved in thinking about your organization's response to crises. You can do that in many ways, but we've found that establishing a CMT - without specifying the kind of crisis that might occur - gets management's attention. With today's news, it's hard to argue against this simple step.

We recommend that a CMT have five (5) or seven (7) members: you don't want any "tie votes" in a crisis. Every division or business line does not need to be represented. You want decision-makers with a broad perspective on the business priorities of your organization. The CMT should include representatives from Information Technology, Human Resources, Corporate Communications (Public Relations), and Facilities (Property Manager), either as full members or as *ex-officio* members.

2. Schedule regular meetings of the CMT

Your CMT should meet at least four (4) times per year (approximately quarterly), and more often if they are serious about planning. What should they do at the meetings? Read the rest of this list. You'll want to get the PA's or secretaries of the senior managers to help set up these meetings.

3. Succession Plan

Each member of the CMT should have a designated successor - an individual who can make decisions for the CMT member if he or she is unavailable in a crisis. This can be a sensitive subject; it is best discussed

before a crisis. The members of the CMT should fill in the [succession form](#) at the end of this document, and each member of the CMT should keep a copy.

4. Quorum

How many members of the Crisis Management Team are necessary to make decisions for the CMT? We recommend that the consent of at least two (2) members of the CMT be required to activate your organization's plan (for example, to relocate employees or to activate the computer systems at a backup site). *Any* two (2) members of the CMT should be able to make the decision to declare a disaster and activate the recovery plan; the decision should not require the participation of any particular member of the CMT.

Only the Managing Director (President, CEO) should be able to make the decision to activate your organization's plan by herself or himself, and only if no one else is around to participate in making the decision.

It should be possible for one or more members of the CMT to participate in the decision without being physically present at your organization's facility; they may be on a business trip. FCP recommends that no decision to activate any recovery plan be taken without consultation with the IT Manager, HR Manager and Facilities (Property Manager) or designated successors.

5. Travel Policy

We recommend that your CMT establish and observe a travel policy, such as: no more than two (2) CMT members may travel in the same conveyance (*e.g.*, airplane, taxicab) together at any time. Remember: many more people are injured in automobile wrecks than perish in plane crashes.

We suggest the policy also require at least two (2) members of the CMT to be present at your facility - or at least in the same city as your facility - at all times. Note: Air travel was temporarily suspended in September 2001, even as far from New York as Australia. You can't be sure CMT members will be able to get home.

Someone must be responsible for ensuring compliance with these policies - another good reason to have the PA's and secretaries of the CMT members helping you.

6. BCP Activation Triggers

Speed of reaction and decision-making is often critical in an emergency. We recommend that the CMT collectively decide certain "trigger" points - conditions or times after which some action (such as activating your BCP) will be taken.

For example, how long can the company sit idle if electrical power is lost, before the CMT decides to move some people to a location that has electrical power? We've included suggestions in the [Declaration or Activation Triggers](#) table at the end of this document. Use these as ideas to get your CMT thinking.

7. Notification Call Tree

Upon declaration, CMT members should notify selected individuals, who in turn notify other individuals, who notify other individuals, until everyone has been contacted. This is a 'Notification Call Tree'. It is time-consuming to update a large call tree with current phone numbers, but it costs almost nothing. It's a good way to get the Human Resources department involved; they are most likely to have accurate phone numbers for employees. Note: don't list only employee's office numbers. You need mobile phone numbers, home numbers and pager numbers.

Testing the speed and accuracy of your organization's Call Tree can be conducted even without a BCP. This test should be scheduled each calendar quarter.

Automated Alternative

Automate the notification process, using a computerized system. There are many emergency notification systems and services available, though not many in Asia. The initial cost is offset by much higher speed of contacting everyone in an emergency, because automated systems can reach multiple employees simultaneously by phone, SMS and pager.

Alternative: 'Call Pool'

Instead of trying to reach everyone, give all employees one phone number to call, and give them permanent instructions to report in to that number as soon as they can after an evacuation or other emergency. We call this a 'Call Pool'. The number should be in a telephone exchange well away from your office, in case the phone network near your facility isn't working. The number can be staffed, or be answered by voice mail. The sole purpose is to account for all employees as quickly as possible by having them call a phone 'pool'.

8. 'Disaster' Phone Number

A call tree may not reach everyone if phone lines are unavailable, or if one 'branch' of the call tree isn't contacted. We suggest that, in addition to a call tree, you establish a dedicated telephone number for employees to call if your building is evacuated. This number, unlike the Call Pool, is outbound - for the CMT to distribute information to employees.

Employees can call the number to obtain periodic updates about the emergency. Give all employees the number the day they are hired.

- Standard, non-emergency message to be recorded when number set up
- Activation message can be recorded by CMT member on activation
- Maximum time between recorded updates; we recommend four (4) hours initially, later reduced to two (2) times a day

9. Assembly Point

In an evacuation, employees should know where to go and how to get there. They need an Assembly Point, at which they can be counted and given instructions. As a guideline, your Assembly Point should be a distance from your building equal to one-and-a-half times the height of your building. You don't want your colleagues standing under any falling debris. The big danger you're trying to avoid: flying glass from broken windows.

The Assembly Point must not be where emergency responders (police, fire, ambulance) are going to set up their command post if there is an emergency at your building.

10. Emergency Cards

To help employees remember the phone number and the location of the Assembly Point, you can print and distribute issue plastic cards – the size of credit cards - to all employees. The cards can show the Call Pool and Disaster Telephone numbers, a rough map to the Assembly Point, and the names of CMT members and their mobile phone numbers. Making and distributing the cards is a task the CMT can assign to Human Resources.

11. Evacuation Rehearsals

Do you know how long it *really* takes to get all your employees out of the building? A fire drill doesn't tell you: it's often announced in advance, and not all employees participate. Evacuating and marshalling at the Assembly Point is a good activity in which to involve the Facilities (Property) Manager. Hint: if the CMT doesn't participate, you can't be surprised if employees don't participate.

12. Site Assessment Team

If your facility is damaged – or if you don't know if it's damaged - the CMT will want to know the condition of the building as quickly as possible. We recommend that the CMT assign Facilities (Property) to form a Site Assessment Team, staff by individuals who can assess the condition of the building, and the condition of computers and networks. These individuals do not need to be employees; they

should have structural or IT engineering expertise. Without these people, your CMT will be forced to depend on public authorities (fire, police) or insurance claims adjusters.

The CMT can contract with a suitable vendor for damage assessment, emergency stabilization and equipment inventory.

14. Your Building or Property Manager

Your organization depends on the building or property manager to maintain the facility's infrastructure, and to act as a representative to the public authorities in an emergency at your building. It is a good idea to establish a good, working relationship with the building management – before an emergency. Topics to talk about with the property manager, in which your organization has a strong interest, include

- Electrical Power
- Emergency Electrical Generator
- HVAC (Heating, Ventilating & Air Conditioning)
- Telephone
- Security
- Refuse Removal
- Parking
- Water (potable & non-potable)
- Building Automation System
- Fire Detection & Suppression
- Evacuation
- Property Insurance

Your organization can undertake some or all of these tasks, even if you don't yet have a business continuity plan. All of these are part of preparing for an emergency or disaster, so by starting now, you will have made a good start on your BCP...

If you have questions, please write to info@calamity.com.sg to have your questions answered. Please include your name and your organization's name in your email.

Thanks for your interest.

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Activation or Declaration Triggers

Event	Trigger	Time
Facility availability Facility evacuation	Crisis Mgmt Team decision	Within two (2) hours
Financial If loss or exposure amount exceeds	US\$	Immediate?
Physical Damage Water Fire No electrical service Loss of telephone service Loss of air quality (air con)	system failure, danger to life or health, no potable water danger to life or health, smoke damage, loss of access when UPS and generator run out, about ?? hours customers cannot call in, employees cannot call out staff inability to work, health risk, system failure	One (1) day Immediate Three (3) hours Four (4) hours Four (4) hours
Loss of access/evacuation Facility condition unknown Re-entry time unknown	cannot get reliable information cannot make reliable estimate	Two (2) hours Two (2) hours
Loss of key people Designated key people CMT members traveling injury, hospitalization, death	Insert names of 'key' staff cannot contact CMT members in emergency cannot be handled by HR staff	One (1) day? Three (3) hours? Immediate?
Loss or damage to computer systems Internal systems External systems Computer virus	loss of system availability, integrity, control loss of system availability, integrity, control IT department observation, decision	One (1) day? One (1) day? Immediate?