



**Subject: Flirting with Disaster without a Plan?**

September 7, 2006

Dear Real Estate Executive,

Disaster recovery and business continuity planning are processes that help you prepare for disruptive events—whether it is a hurricane or simply a power outage. The terms business continuity and disaster recovery are often used interchangeably to describe an organization's ability to survive a disastrous event. However, disaster recovery planning is actually a subset of business continuity planning.

Developing a business continuity plan has long been considered a luxury that only large enterprises can afford. The reality is, business continuity planning is a necessity for all organizations. In fact, small and midsized businesses are often perceived as being less disaster resilient than large, geographically dispersed multinational companies. In looking at recent events like Hurricane Katrina, this perception was, unfortunately, proven true.

So what do these plans include? All Business Continuity plans need to encompass how employees will communicate, where they will go and how they will keep doing their jobs. The details can vary, depending on the size and scope of your organization and the way it does business. But the critical point is that the physical, IT and human resources plans cannot be developed in isolation from each other. At its heart, Business Continuity is about constant communication.

So where should you start? A good first step is a business impact analysis (BIA). This will identify the business's most crucial systems and processes and the effect an outage would have on the business. The greater the potential impact, the more money you should spend to restore a system or process quickly. A BIA will help you set a restoration sequence to determine which parts of the business should be restored first.

Having determined the impacts, it is now equally important to consider the magnitude of the risks, which could result in these impacts. Again, this is a critical

activity - it will determine which scenarios are most likely to occur and which should attract most attention during the planning process.

Having a firm understanding of the impacts and risks serves as a foundation for creating of the business continuity plan. A plan, even if incomplete, is better than no plan at all. At a minimum, it should ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. It should also include tested procedures that focus on the safety of employees and the timely resumption of business-critical and revenue-generating activities. There's no easy way to determine whether your organization can recover after a disaster. But a solid, comprehensive plan will certainly provide the direction necessary to make a recovery feasible.

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<http://www.realtor.org/crtsecure.nsf/pages/resources?OpenDocument>

Articles and guides on Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery:

<http://www.continuitycentral.com/basicbc.htm>

<http://www.drii.org/>

<http://www.disaster-recovery-guide.com/>