

# Cut Downtime with our Continuity Best Practices



Timothy Roe  
VP Services Development

*Communication is vital in a disaster. Your agency needs to know what to do, and the plan to get back normal operations.*

Every year, we go through seasons where natural disasters make us think of our readiness to respond and survive. In 2011, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) responded to 242 disasters—more than any other year in history. The threats are real, but there are a number of practical steps your organization can take to help mitigate disruptions to your important operations.

## Prepare your agency

Start by focusing on your agency, not the disaster. Every agency has a core set of processes that run off IT systems and data. When you know which critical processes to protect, it's easier to identify the people and IT systems required to support those processes.

You need to define what "critical" means to your agency and rank each process according to that definition. If you cannot survive without the process, it should be a primary priority. If you can survive a day or two without it, give it a secondary priority. And if you can survive a week or more without it, consider it a low priority. Next, identify the people, applications, and systems needed to support each process. Evaluate the infrastructure for

single points of failure, dependencies, backups, facilities, accessibility, and skilled resources needed to keep them operational.

## Prepare your people

In times of crisis, you need to consider the personal impact the situation will have on your employees. Having redundant systems and backups still won't protect your agency if your people are not available to access them. So protecting your employees is as important as protecting the processes and data in your agency.

Disasters are likely to create stress and panic for your employees. They may be displaced from their homes, their family members may be impacted, or transportation may be down. You need backup plans to keep critical operations working, including housing displaced employees or cross-training employees to perform key processes in place of unavailable employees. Moreover, you should include your agencies continuity plan as part of new employee training. Conduct employee training that includes regular continuity drills with scenarios for different levels of crises to ensure every employee knows



what to do. They must be ready to take action and make decisions. Appoint a crisis management team consisting of leaders with decision-making authority. Then, give your employees a single contact so the appropriate response can be triggered.

## Prepare your communications

Communication is a vital process in a disaster. Your employees need to know what to do, and the plan to get back to normal operations. You need to establish communication early in order to explain your status and capabilities.

## How PCMG can help

PCMG can evaluate, design, and implement IT solutions to improve your agency resiliency. Call your Account Executive today to start discussing a customized continuity strategy for your agency. ■