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Abstract: Although most natural and manmade disasters are unavoidable, companies should take steps to protect their employees, minimize data loss and recover costs. A business continuity plan can reduce financial losses and facilitate a faster recovery, whether the disaster is a fire, earthquake, power outage or even a flu epidemic. This article summarizes the elements of a good continuity plan — including IT access and appropriate insurance coverage.

Prepare for resilience with a business continuity plan

Companies without a disaster recovery or business continuity plan need only consider the aftermath of recent hurricanes. News reports estimated property damage last year of more than $53 billion from Hurricane Helene alone, plus disruption of untold numbers of businesses and services.

While disasters are often unavoidable, companies can protect employees, safeguard data and recover costs by having a business continuity plan, which reduces losses and speeds up recovery from events like fires, earthquakes, power outages or flu outbreaks.

What should your plan encompass?

The complexity of your business continuity plan should align with your company's size, location, the nature of your industry and the specific risks you face. Small companies may not need a sophisticated media relations plan. However, plans should prepare for local risks and gather feedback from department heads, including plans for these three areas:

- **People.** Assign a primary contact and backups to ensure employee safety, at work and at home. This person should maintain an updated list of employee contact information and be ready to coordinate evacuation if needed. Designate an offsite meeting location and a central contact number for check-ins.
- **Information technology**. To remain operational after a disaster, back up email, data, and software offsite or in the cloud. Cloud services allow you to securely restore data from anywhere, keeping communication open with employees, customers and vendors during recovery.
- **Insurance**. Regularly review your insurance coverage to confirm it's sufficient to replace assets, restore operations or relocate if necessary. Consider potential losses, such as intellectual property and lost sales. Check details carefully — standard policies may not cover certain damages, like flooding after a hurricane.

Planning isn't one and done

It's not enough to create a disaster plan. You also need to review, revise and test it periodically. Hold regular fire and other evacuation drills, and ask employees to update personal contact

information. At least once a year, ensure that your IT backup systems are functioning properly and that your insurance coverage is keeping pace with the value of your business. By making business continuity an ongoing process, you and your employees will be ready to act should the worst happen. Contact us with questions.