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Business Continuity in Wild Weather

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As Hurricane Sandy sweeps up the East Coast side of the United States, it has become very clear that having a plan to maintain your business operations and communicate with staff, customers, students and anyone else involved in your day-to-day operations is vital. Furthermore, with weather-related conditions becoming increasingly unpredictable, and with storms growing more and more intense, being prepared to cope with any severe conditions will add value to your business and, more importantly, provide you with peace of mind when managing any related or other similar occurrences.

Ask yourself a few questions – do you know the value of a full day's missed business? Do you customers rely on you to deliver a particular service on a specific day? What structures do you have in place at the moment to deal with unexpected closures or delays? There are a variety of things to consider in making your plan. Here are a number of important elements that will help keep your company on track during an unexpected event.

Design a Business Continuity Plan

From floods, fires and tropical storms to power outages or IT system failures, maintaining a functioning business during any times of crisis, or even during events like this summer's Olympic Games, can be a challenge, but often critical to the long-term success of any business. Consider creating a business continuity plan. By having agreed processes in place that you can rely on to communicate important information to the right people, you become best placed to minimise the disruption you would otherwise incur, whilst also reducing stress on your management team, customers, and staff because they will all be kept in the loop.

Implement an Emergency Notification System

Has your business considered implementing an emergency notification system? There are a number of communication tools that be utilised in an emergency situation, but one that offers multi-device and multi-channel alerting will provide a whole host of benefits. Maintaining communications with staff is imperative but engaging with your customers and other key stakeholders can really go a long way to showing a commitment and dedication to service over and above competitors. Having a system in place where your clients are told about any last-minute changes to schedules, closures, and other critical information is important. Electing to push out regular communications can also ease internal pressures, and prevent congested phones lines, which might otherwise be used to manage the emergency at hand.

Diversify your communications with Paging

Paging remains the fastest, simplest and most reliable way to broadcast important information. An over-subscribed cellular infrastructure during the 7/7 terrorist incidents, Queens Diamond Jubilee celebrations and more recent London 2012 Olympic Games really brought into question the stability of the mobile networks. The strain caused major delays to messages and in extreme cases such as the 7/7 attacks, forced cellular networks to shut down, preventing public access. Recognising a need to diversify communications, the demand for traditional paging has dramatically increased and with the advent of 2-way paging users can now capitalise on the resilience of paging coupled with the ability to acknowledge and respond to messages.

Meeting your duty of care

It may be necessary to monitor the safety and whereabouts of your staff in the event of emergency. Putting measures in place to do this may not be easy, but something as simple as a signing-in book can help you keep track of your employees. In other instances you may need more complex solutions to ensure the safety of vulnerable or field-based staff such as Lone Workers. From simple SOS alerting to sophisticated man-down and GPS location monitoring, there are a range of solutions that allow you to respond and react to staff in distress.

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