

Developing your contingency plan

If you're putting together a contingency plan, you can get a head start by using this checklist of critical elements. The checklist comes from Greg Kelley, who runs the help desk at Solon, OH-based [SS&G Technology Consulting](#).

When its phone service was interrupted, his company followed its plan and had phone lines automatically forwarded to designated cellular phones. According to Kelley, "There was no interruption of service and not a single dissatisfied customer." He credits the contingency plan for the seamless resolution of the problem.

Here are the key elements Kelley recommends that your enterprise cover in its contingency plan.



Contact information for your phone service and vendor telephony equipment vendors

Find a contact at your local phone company who is smart and outgoing and build a relationship with them. Make sure they know you appreciate the work they have done for you and ask them for their direct extension so you can reach them easily. Such actions will go a long way toward getting a quick response out of the service rep when you need it. The same goes for your telephony equipment. (This does not have to be someone in an executive position. Often, customer service representatives work best.)



Specifications detailing minimum requirements for your mission-critical servers

Obviously, you want your mission-critical servers to run the top equipment. However, in an emergency, any equipment is better than none. Have handy the minimum requirements based on whatever mission-critical applications are being run on the servers (e-mail, phone system, database application, and so on).



Contact information for retrieving the above equipment

Which vendor do you have a good record with, someone who can get you the equipment in a heartbeat? Because of lead times, this is probably not someone like Dell or Hewlett-Packard but your local vendor, who can supply the necessary equipment right away. Be sure to have another contact in a different area, since natural disasters will undoubtedly affect local vendors in your area.



Contact information to reach people in your company critical to helping survive the situation (home phone, cellular, pager, alternate numbers)

Those who can authorize purchases, as well as individuals who have detailed knowledge of your systems, are on the first-call list in the event that those systems have to be rebuilt. As the leaders of your company, they'll need to direct operations during an emergency.



Insurance agent contact information

The sooner you can contact your insurance company, the faster it can begin processing claims.

 **Other vendor contact information (ISP for routing of e-mail and temporary Web site)**

Make sure you have contact information for ISPs, electricians, carpenters, plumbers, a PC repair service (if it is outsourced), a copier vendor, an alarm or security company, and anyone else who services or sells equipment to you. Also, you probably want to have contact information for your suppliers and distributors. That way, you can stop, delay, or reroute the shipment of materials and notify distributors of any delays or changes in plans. Keeping them in the loop as you go through a crisis situation will reduce the amount of business lost by having them go elsewhere.

 **Step-by-step plans and timeframe if an office needs to be set up in an alternate location**

If you have to move your offices, you will need to know what has to be in place at the new location, as well as what has to be salvaged from the old location. Identify places you can move to ahead of time, considering such things as security at your new location and, depending on the emergency, additional security at the old location to prevent theft and looting.

Other items to consider here are the routing of phone lines, dedicated Internet access lines, notification of postal services, distributors, suppliers, and letting all employees know where to report to work.

 **Sample forms for taking messages and processing any other information your company uses, such as order and dispatch service forms (You want to keep running, don't you?)**

Instead of handing out blank pieces of paper and pens to take messages and place orders, hand out formatted pieces of paper to take this information down. By having prompts and spaces for all pertinent information, you reduce the amount of mistakes by people who may not be thinking too clearly during a crisis. Also, if you are hiring temporary employees to help in a crisis, these types of documents will allow them to help you with minimal training needed.

 **A hierarchy of critical services and infrastructure to determine what should be brought online first**

When the IS department thinks that e-mail is mission-critical and the marketing and sales department feels that the fax machine is most important, an agreed-upon schedule of which services should come online first will help determine priorities. A simple planning meeting to assess your infrastructure and determine which systems are more important than others will allow you to create a list of what areas to work on first when you have to start from ground zero.