

Emergency / Crisis Management techniques

Is your Workplace Disasters Ready?

June 27, 2013



When we think of disasters and the workplace, it's usually in the context of a natural disaster such as tornadoes, hurricanes or earthquakes- depending on where one is located. But these are actually the tip of the iceberg - which is a good analogy in fact. The iceberg that was struck by the Titanic would not be considered a "natural disaster" in the same way as a hurricane, but it was no less a disaster for the Titanic.

Because of the belief that the ship was unsinkable, less attention was given to preparing for such an event. Any instructions on how to abandon ship, don life vests, etc., were given tongue in cheek, if at all. Design and other interests were given precedence over providing sufficient life boats, primarily due to management perception that "it can't happen here."

When an emergency strikes your workplace, there's no time for hesitation-or for trying to figure out what to do. To survive an emergency, you and your workforce have to already know what to do. Emergency, or Crisis, plans must be well developed, often practiced, and ready to be put into action at a moment's notice.

Emergency planning and response is one of the most important aspects of safety management-keeping employees safe no matter what. It is also a crucial element of [business continuity planning](#), and those responsible for creating policy and procedures for both aspects must work together to create an effective overall plan.

Types of Emergencies

- **Fires** are the most common type of workplace emergency. The [National Fire Protection Association](#) reports that a fire department somewhere in America responds to a fire [every 23 seconds](#). The [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) estimates that fires cause as many as 10,000 employee injuries and 200 employee deaths every year. In addition, the [United States Fire Administration](#) says that property losses due to industrial fires cost U.S. businesses more than \$4 billion a year in property losses and more than \$8 billion in business interruption costs (see NFPA 1600 for laws and guidelines regarding fire prevention).
- **Explosions** resulting from fires, chemical reactions, combustible dust, or other causes can claim many lives, leave many more badly injured, and destroy property (see OSHA laws and guidelines for identifying chemicals to aid in firefighting and to protect personnel).
- **Natural disasters** such as earthquakes and tornadoes can strike with little or no warning. Hurricanes and floods may be forecast, but effective emergency action in these situations may nevertheless be required (see NOAA, Department of Homeland Security, Office of Emergency Management, Building Construction Guidelines, and First Responders for assistance in recognizing and responding to potential hazards)
- **Toxic chemical releases** can require emergency response within the workplace and in the surrounding community (again review OSHA laws and regulations for assistance in recognizing and responding to potential hazards).
- **Workplace violence** can erupt at any time in any department. Supervisors, managers, and employees must be prepared to respond quickly and appropriately in these dangerous and sometime life-threatening situations (see Appendix A).

- **Terrorism**, especially since 9/11, has become yet another disaster to add to your list. Some may look at that list, nodding at some, shaking their head at others. “No chance of this, or that, happening here.” Granted, but what about down the street? Consider your neighbors when creating response plans. Your office might not be at direct risk for an explosion or chemical release, for example, but the chemical plant a mile away doesn’t have that same assurance. An accidental (or deliberate) release or explosion there could easily impact your business and your employees. The [explosion of a fertilizer plant](#) in West, Texas, in April 2013 flattened a significant area surrounding the facility, and in the words of a local police sergeant - [“part of that community is gone.”](#)

Planning Advice

To prepare for all potential threats, you need a sensible planning strategy.

[According to Cal/OSHA](#) - “Often, businesses don’t prepare for a disaster, not because they don’t want to but because they think it will involve a resource-intensive project, something many small - and medium-sized businesses can ill afford. While disaster preparedness can turn into a multi-headed monster if not properly managed, disaster preparedness doesn’t have to be that way.” To avoid this “**multi-headed monster**,” you should:

- Determine a **comfortable degree of preparedness**. “There are degrees of preparedness,” says Cal/OSHA. “The bare minimum is that, in a disaster, you can safely evacuate your workers; any processes that could harm workers, the environment, or the public can be secured; and the rest you leave up to whatever outside services may be available. On the other end of the spectrum, you can have all the equipment and supplies to do full disaster response on your own with minimal assistance from outside services.” Each business must decide the level of preparedness that works best for them. Businesses with multiple locations might consider temporary transfer of personnel and/or critical operations to another facility to ensure business continuity.
- Develop a **disaster preparedness checklist**. The checklist should include all aspects of emergency response and will help ensure that you anticipate all essential details.
- **Work with** local First Responders (Fire / Police), Government Organizations (Office of Emergency Management, Department of Homeland Security, Red Cross, Building Management, etc.) to ensure your checklist covers all potential hazards and is coordinated with those organizations that would respond should your facility encounter a disaster event.
- **Evaluate the “what ifs.”** Walk around with your checklist and try to imagine how different emergencies could actually impact your workers and your operations.
- Build your **plan step-by-step**. Don’t wait until you have all the “i’s” dotted and all the “t’s” crossed. Build your plan piece by piece until you have a comprehensive disaster plan you can live with.
- Review and update your **insurance policies** to ensure that you have sufficient coverage to safeguard, salvage, and restore your facility after a disaster event, thereby protecting revenue and enabling a more rapid return to business as usual.
- **Document policies and procedures**. Write up all emergency policies and procedures and make them available to supervisors and employees. Whenever possible integrate these procedures within the everyday functions performed by personnel and include them in personnel job descriptions.
- **Keep your plans up to date**. Review your plan annually and revise as necessary when circumstances, hazards, etc., change. By integrating planning requirements into the everyday functions performed by personnel you will guaranty

that Crisis / Emergency Management Planning is maintained in a current fashion and that your staff can rely on the accuracy of the information.

Achieving Enterprise Resiliency and Gaining Corporate Certification

Based on international and domestic standards developed by leading corporations and standards committees, achieving Corporate Certification insures clients that your company has implemented Resiliency procedures and processes that meet, or exceed, the most recognized and stringent of guidelines for Recovery Operations. Enterprise Resiliency is based on the disciplines of Emergency Management Preparedness, Business Continuity Management, and Workplace Safety and Violence Prevention. In essence, **Enterprise Resiliency** combines all recovery management disciplines into a cohesive structure speaking the same language and utilizing the same set of tools. **Corporate Certification** is responsible for insuring that the company adheres to all laws and regulations of the countries that do business in.

Corporate Certification must be validated by an outside firm who is qualified to review recovery operations and declare a firm in compliance to certification requirements.

Corporate Certification is based on:

- Private Sector Preparedness Act (PL 110-53, Title IX, Section 524);
- National Fire Prevention Association standard 1600; and
- BS25999 International Standard.

Procedures and guidelines included in the Corporate Certification guidelines will provide a direction to follow, including:

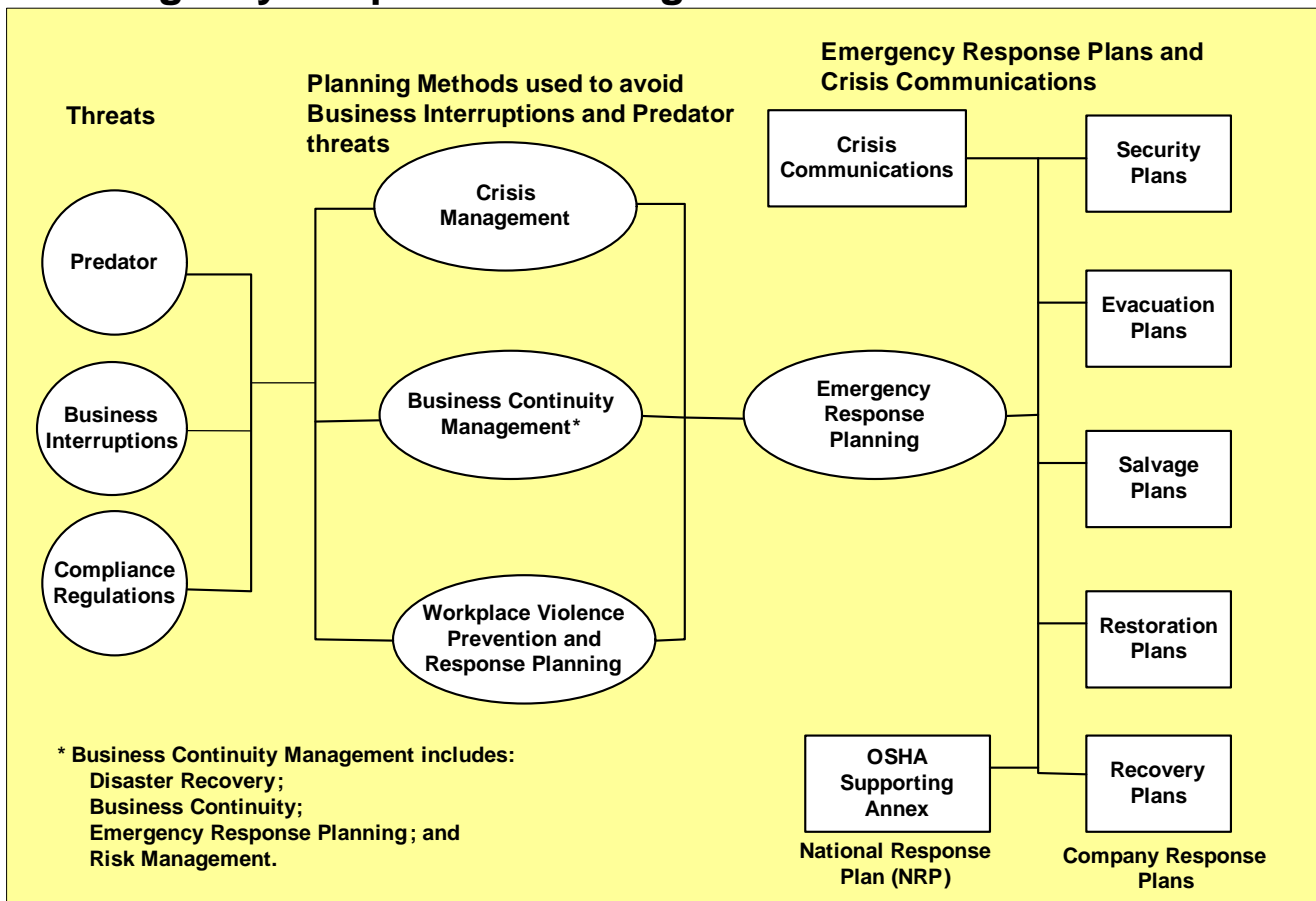
- Defining Risk (Natural and Man-Made);
- Researching and documenting Compliance Requirements;
- Obtaining Best practices tools and guidelines;
- Locating Certification Firms and Organizations;
- Defining Certification Requirements and Adherence Guidelines;
- Creating a Business Plan and Project Plan to implement Corporate Certification;
- Performing a Risk Assessment and Business Impact Analysis;
- Defining Audit Requirements and Checkpoints;
- Elimination of any identified Gaps and Exceptions through Mitigations and Controls;
- Defining the Recovery Organization, Functional Responsibilities, Job Description, and Standards and Procedures for developing and maintaining recovery operations;
- Providing Awareness and Educational Courses; and
- Developing Recovery Plans for Business Recovery Management, Emergency Management Preparedness, and Workplace Violence Prevention.

Emergency Response Structure

The structure of a recovery operation should provide for the identification of all threats, reduction and/or avoidance of business interruptions, and compliance with all regulatory requirements. The recovery operations environment should be able to use planning disciplines like Crisis Management, Business Continuity Management, and Workplace Safety and Violence Prevention Planning to support Emergency / Crisis Response Planning operations.

Reducing threats and business interruptions, while adhering to compliance requirements, is the goal of any company. Achieving this goal requires the full cooperation of all existing recovery disciplines and ensuring that all national and local regulations are adhered to. Refer to Homeland Security and the Office of Emergency Management to learn about National Response Plans, while First Responders (Fire / Police) can provide essential local assistance in developing recovery plans that will best protect people, customers, suppliers, and business operations.

Emergency Response Planning environment



Achieving a recovery structure that supports Emergency Response Planning through Crisis Management, Business Continuity Management, and Workplace Violence Prevention will allow an organization to protect against Predators, Business Interruptions, and allow for the adherence to Compliance Regulations.

Emergency Response Plans can be constructed to provide Crisis Communications, OSHA compliance through National Response Plans (Hazardous Materials, etc.), Security Plans to protect assets and personnel, Evacuation Plans, Salvage Plans, Restoration Plans, and Recovery Plans.

Related articles

- [Does Your Small Business Have An Emergency Preparedness Plan?](#)(succeedasyourownboss.com)
- [Disaster Preparedness Article; escape tools and disaster plans, Part 2](#) (escapetools8458.wordpress.com)
- [Red Cross: Business should prepare for disaster now](#) (cjonline.com)
- [Disaster Preparedness](#) (disasterrelief5.wordpress.com)
- [Hazard Awareness Week 2013 focuses on disaster preparedness](#)(dominicanewsonline.com)
- [Book Review – The Preppers Instruction Manual by Arthur Bradley 5 out of 5 Stars](#)(greatwaveink.com)
- [Disaster preparedness – Emergencies are Sexy?](#) (oldschoolpreppinghomesteadingselfreliance.wordpress.com)

The Enterprise Resiliency Environment

The final step in implementing an Enterprise Resiliency environment is to integrate the recovery operations throughout the organization, including Command Centers, Lines of Business, Emergency Response Management, Business Continuity Management, Workplace Violence Prevention, and Business Integration. Achieving Corporate Certification will require integrating the Private Sector Preparedness Act; BS25999 international standards, and the National Fire Prevention Association standard 1600.

An illustration of the final Enterprise Resiliency Organizational Structure is provided as a guideline for you to follow. You may not complete all sections shown, but any improvement will result in better recovery operations and more protection for you people and business. It can be considered a foundation that will allow for the inclusion of the various recovery disciplines, a common language, and a common set of recovery tools.

To view additional articles on Enterprise Resiliency and Corporate Certification, go to my web site a www.dcac.com. There you will also locate examples of my work regarding a variety of topics, like:

- Personnel Productivity System
- Asset Management System
- Crisis Management System
- Automated Forms Management and Workflow optimization
- Application Migration and Data Center Consolidation Guidelines
- New Healthcare Industry laws and regulations (HIPAA, HITECH, ePHI, and Final Omnibus Rule)

Other information pertaining to how to build a safeguarded and compliant business environment that is prepared to respond to a wide variety of disaster events can be located at my site as well.

An example of a fully integrated Emergency / Crisis Management support structure is show below.

I hope this article helps you achieve your goals and protects you business and its reputation going forward. Should you need any help, I can be reached at: Mobile Phone (917) 673-6992, Land Line (718) 591-5553, Email: bronackt@dcag.com.

Fully integrated Enterprise Resiliency Environment

Integrating Recovery Operations and Disciplines

