

business as us



Business Unusual

how business
continuity planning
goes beyond
emergency
response

“Three things are certain: death, taxes and you don’t have an OSHA-compliant emergency action plan.”¹

Facility managers are accustomed to adapting customized solutions to client’s facility requirements, making them innately well-suited to a crucial role within emergency and business continuity planning. And as the nature of business is to remain in a constant state of flux, FM’s are also adept at taking on the role of change agent — sometimes unofficially.

Ensuring normal business resumes quickly after a critical event and taking responsibility for the life safety of facility occupants is another area in which FM’s “sometimes unofficially” find themselves. The workplace is susceptible to a range of threats and risks. Without a formal recovery strategy or someone authorized to lead it, businesses could face further catastrophes.

One of the worst mistakes an organization can make is to settle for a simplified solution to the complex necessity of business continuity planning. The tendency to downplay business resilience following an emergency nurtures a dangerous denial, encouraging impromptu responses to unpredictable events.



BY STEVEN C. EARLY



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In their article, “The Five Things You Need to Know About Business Resilience Planning,” Maureen Roskoski and Steven Clawson of Facility Engineering Associates (FEA) note, “an emergency response plan is not enough — an effective business continuity plan is the cornerstone of effective planning efforts, and will frame your ability to respond, resume and recover.”²

The Business Continuity Institute (BCI) Horizon Scan Report, an essential resource for business continuity, risk and resilience, identified cyberattacks as the No. 1 threat in 2016 and 2017.³ In the 2017 report, adverse weather moved up three places from last year to enter the top five. And don’t overlook risks within risks — a snapshot poll conducted by an identity and access management solutions company revealed that “bored and distracted employees could be the biggest data security risk.”⁴

Due to the human element in the workplace, businesses must be vigilant in meeting regulatory and compliance requirements. Facility managers are used to operating within the legislative framework, placing FMs in a unique position to not only act as change agents for improving preparedness and response procedures; but also, officially leading them.

Turn to page 57 to read more about the 2017 BCI Horizon Scan Report and measures FMs should consider to prepare for disruption.



Most facilities groups are familiar with emergency preparedness, and many probably have some documentation onsite as far as what to do in case of an emergency. But are you truly ready to efficiently resume business after an emergency or a major disruption?”⁵

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, BREAK GLASS

Many organizations are not in compliance with the law, let alone actually prepared for an emergency.¹ Regulatory and compliance burdens with respect to emergency planning vary by geographic location and industry; but organizations in the United States must meet certain basic Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards, regardless of size, location or industry. Companies in countries outside the U.S. are bound by similar requirements that they too fail to achieve.

The authors of “Soft Targets and Crisis Management: What Emergency Planners and Security Professionals Need to Know,” Drs. Michael J. Fagel and Jennifer L. Hesterman reveal,

“Responsibility for security is often passed on to owners and operators who have no training and few resources. In military terms, we are leaving our flank exposed.”⁶

Those of us responsible for a company and its assets have an ethical duty to protect the people in our charge. Failing to successfully fulfill what, in American legal parlance might be termed “affirmative duty of care,” can result in civil, personal and criminal prosecution.

U.S. regulatory bodies have become more stringent. Over the past several years, 11 CEOs have been indicted — eight imprisoned — on charges related to negligence during an emergency that resulted in harm or death.



A professional facility manager does not question the possibility of a disaster occurring, but asks: What type of disasters could happen, and when?”⁷

FM IS THE NEXUS

As the nexus between the built environment and all other areas of the business — finance, information technology, human resources, C-suite — FMs are positioned to assess threats throughout the organization, integrating them into a cohesive business continuity plan.

Disaster recovery experts Al Berman and Anthony Pizzitola write, “For a facility to maintain business continuity, it must be inspected with risks being identified, controlled and corrected.”⁸ However, business resilience initiatives need the full support of senior leadership, and the cooperation of your counterparts in connected services. Without allies,

even the most comprehensive plan to safeguard life and property will come to naught.

Bo Mitchell, a nationally recognized expert in the field of emergency management and preparation, agrees that the first step any facility manager should take toward emergency preparedness is to perform a thorough threat assessment; but cautions that devoid of a coalition of internal stakeholders in support of a business resilience plan, the facility manager is unlikely to break through the denial that such a plan is necessary. According to Mitchell, “If the expertise and drive existed within the organization to properly develop a plan, they would likely have already done so.”⁹



FIGURE 1 This graphic illustrates how “The facility manager plays a unique role in business resilience, specifically in helping the organization create workplace environments that aid the mission and help the business continue in the case of disruptive events.”¹²

“A plan that is not communicated to your employees, and not practiced and updated periodically, is merely a plan to fail.”⁷

MAINTAIN FOCUS, MANAGE RISK, INTEGRATE PROCESSES

Emergencies affect everyone; so everyone, regardless of position, should be thoroughly prepared to take appropriate action. Yet, emergency response plans on their own are not enough to ensure that people navigate and resolve the crisis safely. The plan should include organization-wide communication, mandatory training and periodic drills. Rapid, practiced response to emergencies is especially necessary in larger facilities and complexes.

In addition to careful study of applicable standards, facility managers can look to established best practices as guides in crafting an emergency preparedness communication and training plan. Adopting field-tested tools and practices for your own needs is part of the art and science of facility management. This may also entail “cooperative activity,”⁹ wherein similar or neighboring facilities come to an agreement on collaborative

roles supporting functions such as emergency planning.

In a case study on business resilience, “Equipping You for Success: An ISO 22301 Case Study,” FEA notes that: “Certification can add value; but more importantly, adopting and leveraging standards can contribute to improved performance in most cases. By simply adopting standards, even without certification, organizations realize value in three areas: maintain focus, manage risk and integrate processes.”¹⁰

The global economy requires organizations to safeguard supply chains to the extent stakeholders and customers are assured successful delivery on the promise of product. Standards such as ISO 22301¹¹ and NFPA 1600¹² coupled with certifications establish standardized business continuity practices, in turn allowing businesses to select supply partners based on adherence to said standards.

“Everyone from every corner of the organization plays a role in business resilience and has something to benefit from the continuity of business-as-usual.”⁵

LEADERSHIP, HONESTY AND COMPASSION

Effective response to crisis dramatically mitigates the loss of life and curbs company stock valuation loss commonly associated with critical events. This is due to stakeholder confidence.

Organizations must perform a comprehensive analysis of standards to find the right fit. Companies must also examine key performance areas and what might impact them through a business impact analysis. What works for one organization may be ill-suited for another, so it is important to take the necessary time and effort to build specific plans for long-term success based on the organizational mission. Facility professionals need to carefully analyze the requirements of stakeholders, and fully invest in education on business continuity practices, standards and certifications.

One of the most compelling resources garnering interest in business resilience planning among senior management is a report by Rory Knight and Deborah Petty. The authors advise that “firms are more likely to experience efficient value recovery if they demonstrate strong leadership, honesty and compassion.”¹³ Careful study of this report will allow FMs to draw a clear picture of the correlation between company valuation in the face of how well (or how badly) the company handles emergency recovery.



Life safety is a core management responsibility. There are those that believe that is the first responsibility of any employer.”¹

FROM TORNADOES TO PAPAL VISITS

A growing wealth of online resources can be of great assistance in emergency and business continuity planning. While the following aids are U.S.-based, the core premises can be adapted to other locales:

- **U.S. Small Business Administration**
www.preparemybusiness.org
- **NIMS 100 Course**
training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview
- **FEMA NIMS**
www.ready.gov/severe-weather

It is also worthwhile to investigate resources addressing specific scenarios, such as the case study by Emma Paras et al. detailing the layers of emergency planning performed in preparation for a Papal visit to Philadelphia in 2015.¹⁴ There is much to be learned from large-scale emergency planning for mass gatherings, especially from a “you never know” perspective.

Regardless of the practices you choose to follow or which approach to resilience planning fits your organization best, all FMs should dedicate themselves to preparing their facilities and the people inside fully — ensuring to the greatest degree possible that all in their charge remain safe through the tumult of an emergency and resume business quickly afterward. **FMJ**

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