

3. CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUSINESSES AND ORGANISATIONS

GENERAL ADVICE ON PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES

3.1. The incidents described in this document, whether natural, accidental or deliberate, can cause significant disruption to businesses and organisations. Planning for these disruptive events now could be vital to the continuing success or survival of your business or organisation. The Government aims to ensure all organisations have a clear understanding of Business Continuity Management (BCM). BCM can ensure your organisation can handle an emergency, continue to function and recover effectively afterwards. Notably, the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 made it a statutory requirement for all emergency responder organisations, local authorities and NHS bodies, collectively referred to in the act as Category 1 responders, to put in place BCM arrangements.

BS25999 is a code of practice that takes the form of guidance and recommendations. The process, principles and terminology of BCM are outlined in the BS25999 code of practice which provides a basis for understanding, developing and implementing business continuity within an organisation. Further information can be found on the British Standards Institution

website¹⁵. This section outlines the importance of BCM, and discusses how best to achieve business continuity.

A 2009 report by the Chartered Management Institute in conjunction with the Cabinet Office, 'A Decade of Living Dangerously'¹⁶, presents findings of business continuity research. The report demonstrates how BCM can make a real difference by improving an organisation's flexibility, readiness and ultimate viability in the face of an ever-changing risk environment. However, while business continuity has vastly improved over the last ten years, large gaps remain.

- 3.2. BCM is a holistic approach to protecting your organisation that comprises of three distinct elements:
- The first is a thorough understanding of your organisation, identifying the critical activities that disruptions must affect the least, for example, a 'business impact analysis';
 - The second is to plan to ensure that your organisation can continue in these activities during an incident and period of disruption;

¹⁵ <http://www.bsigroup.com/>

¹⁶ http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/153711/cmibcm_2009.pdf

- The third is the recovery phase that sets the plans to resume to normal activity as soon as possible.

3.3. The BS25999 British Standard sets out six elements to the BCM process¹⁷, which it recommends organisations should follow to implement BCM successfully. These steps, detailed below, can be implemented by organisations of all sizes and in all sectors:

- **BCM Programme Management:** to achieve this, top-level engagement is vital as it disseminates the importance of BCM throughout the organisation.
- **Understanding the organisation** via an 'impact analysis' to identify critical business activities and what impact a disruption may have on them.
- **Determining a BCM strategy** based upon the results of the impact analysis. This should take into account resources such as people, premises, technology, supplies and stakeholders and allows an appropriate response to ensure an organisation can continue to deliver services and products to an acceptable level and within an acceptable timeframe.
- **Developing and implementing a BCM response:** this involves producing the plans that detail the steps to be taken during and after an incident to maintain and restore capabilities.

- **Exercising, maintaining and reviewing:** it is essential to ensure plans are always complete, current and accurate.
- **Embedding BCM in the organisation's culture:** this enables BCM to become part of the organisation's core values and instils confidence in all stakeholders in the ability of the organisation to cope with disruptions. For example, appropriate training should be provided to all staff to ensure they understand their place in the BCM process.

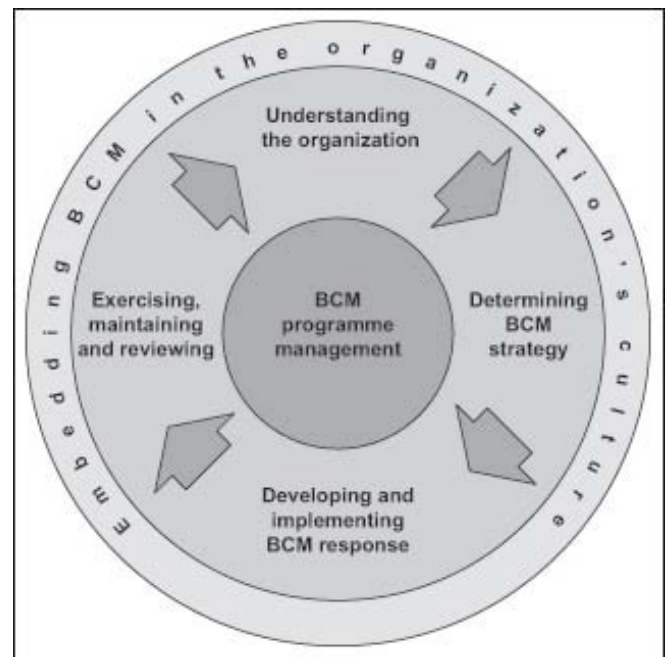


Figure 2. The six steps to embedding BCM within your organisation.

3.4. BCM is an inexpensive but essential area to any organisation and business, it should never be seen as 'done' by those who adopt it but rather a golden thread that runs through all business activities. While there is an investment in initially deciding to introduce the method, this will pay for itself over and over again in offering demonstrable evidence to foster confidence in stakeholders.

¹⁷ Permission to reproduce extracts BS25999 British Standard is granted by BSI. British Standards can be obtained in PDF or hard copy formats from the BSI online shop: www.bsigroup.com/shop or by contacting BSI Customer Services for hardcopies only: Tel: +44 (0)20 8996 9001, Email: cservices@bsigroup.com.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS

3.5. The Government offers pragmatic advice on how to prepare for specific scenarios and emergencies on the Business Link website¹⁸. For example, employers may wish to consider the following questions when developing their business continuity plans.

Loss of staff in an emergency

How would your organisation cope with significant reductions in staff?

3.6. Organisations should aim to put in place measures to maintain essential business activities in the event of high levels of staff absence. Specifically:

- Organisations employing large numbers of people should ensure that plans are capable of handling cumulative staff absence rates of up to 15% over a 2–3 week period.
- Smaller businesses, or larger organisations with small critical teams, should plan for level of absence rising to 30–35% of employees.

These measures could include:

- Identifying the activities that are critical to their business and those which could be curtailed or stopped during periods of significant staff shortages.

- Calculating the minimum number of staff required to carry out critical activities.
- Identifying the skills and expertise required to undertake the critical activities and develop an inventory of staff skills to assist with staff redeployment.
- Identifying staff that could be moved from non-essential to critical activities and possible training requirements.
- Introducing cross training of skills across a number of individuals.
- Identifying essential posts and individuals whose absence would place business continuity at particular risk, and incorporating succession planning for key personnel.
- Carrying out mapping of business processes to allow staff to undertake different roles. This could involve: describing the flow of materials, information and documents; displaying the various tasks contained within the processes; indicating the decisions that need to be made along the chain; and showing the essential relationships and interdependencies between the process steps.
- Developing or expanding self-service and online options for customers and business partners.

3.7. Organisations may also wish to think about the specific consequences of an influenza pandemic upon their workforce. Relevant

¹⁸ www.businesslink.gov.uk

information can be found on the Department of Health's website¹⁹.

Loss of transport or business location in an emergency

Does your organisation have adequate business continuity measures in place to cope with significant disruption to transport?

3.8. Disruption to local, regional or international transport used by staff or for the delivery of supplies may affect critical activities, both directly and indirectly. To minimise the impact of this disruption, employers may wish to consider:

- Recording alternative routes and methods of transport available to staff to assess who may have difficulties getting to work, or travelling for business purposes, and who may be able to work remotely if necessary.
- Examining contingency options so that the impact of a disruption on the delivery of goods and services can be mitigated.

How would denial of access to a site or geographical area affect your organisation?

3.9. Denial of access to a site or area can arise from a variety of incidents and range from a few hours to many months, for example, due to flooding or the accidental or deliberate release of a harmful substance. During an incident, the emergency responders will provide advice on what action should be taken. This advice should be followed at all times. However, organisations should consider developing

evacuation and invacuation plans in case staff, customers and visitors need to leave or shelter within premises in an emergency. When creating these plans, organisations may wish to:

- Consider in advance under what circumstances the organisation may need to evacuate or invacuate (confine inside) staff.
- Develop safety, first-aid or evacuation assistance teams and plans that can support staff during those circumstances.
- Develop plans to locate and account for those who were on site or in the immediate vicinity and any special arrangements required for vulnerable staff.
- Consider how to provide staff and customer communications and safety briefings in the event of an evacuation or invacuation.
- Think about how staff will be moved from the assembly point to an alternative site, a place of safety or home.
- Ensure there is a robust telephone and/or email cascade system for contacting staff, outside working hours if necessary. This could be used for providing information on where staff will be relocated in an emergency.
- Ensure that data is backed-up and kept off site and test that any backed-up data can be recovered.
- Think about the mechanisms in place to provide information to other stakeholders such as suppliers and key customers.

¹⁹ www.dh.gov.uk

- Prepare an 'emergency pack' of items that will help your organisation to implement its plans. This could include: copies of business continuity plans, including staff contact information and customer and supplier details; a building site plan; insurance company details; financial information; equipment, such as computer back up disks, USB memory sticks, spare keys and security codes; and a fully charged mobile telephone.
- Consider what other essential items may need to be moved to the alternative site or sites to ensure essential business functions are maintained.
- Ensure members of staff are familiar with evacuation and invacuation procedures and that these are regularly practiced.

3.10. Where possible, employers may also want to arrange an alternative back-up site and consider:

- From what sites (locations or premises) the organisation currently conducts its critical activities.
- What plant, machinery and other facilities are required to carry out critical activities.
- Whether or not the organisation would be able to continue essential activities following denial of access to all physical assets in a particular area.
- What alternative sites the organisation has access to.
- Whether the alternative sites are susceptible to the same (or other) risks as the current site.

3.11. Organisations may need to adapt working practices if premises were to be evacuated. This could involve:

- The displacement of staff performing less urgent business processes with staff performing higher priority activities.
- Remote working (for example, staff working from home or other locations).
- Ensuring that essential information is stored securely (such as in a fireproof safe), and developing plans for salvaging assets and records.

Loss of utilities and communications in an emergency

How would your organisation cope with an unexpected loss of mains electricity?

3.12. Organisations should prepare for the possibility of total loss of electricity for an entire region for up to 24 hours, and to some rural areas for up to one week. Also, in the case of reduced generational capacity, planned four hour rota cuts may be introduced and if there is an unexpected total shutdown of the grid, power will begin to be restored across the grid over three days.

3.13. Loss of mains electricity can affect lighting, heating, air conditioning and electronic equipment, and could result in data loss or corruption. However, if the electricity outage is widespread, the secondary effects can also include loss of mains water and sewerage after six hours; loss of mobile communications after one hour, depending on back-up arrangements; disruption to

financial transactions; and closure of petrol stations.

3.14. Organisations can prepare for this disruption by considering:

- Alternative methods of working which do not require mains electricity.
- Rostering the workforce to match known rota cuts.
- Closing non-essential premises in the event of prolonged loss of electricity.
- Having back-up power supplies (for example, standby generators or uninterruptible power supplies).
- Backing-up data regularly.

How would your organisation be affected by disruption to the supply of mains water and sewerage?

3.15. Organisations should have plans in place for the mains water and sewerage systems to be disrupted for up to three days. To prepare for such disruption, businesses may wish to consider:

- The health and safety needs of staff (such as the requirement for drinking water and sanitation).
- How water critical services would be affected (for example, air conditioning or computer cooling systems).

Is your organisation prepared for disruption to the availability of oil and fuel?

3.16. In certain scenarios, such as industrial action by fuel contract drivers, fuel distribution may be disrupted. To prepare for possible disruption, organisations should consider:

- The impact of fuel unavailability on supply chains and operations.
- Limiting the use of existing fuel to critical activities.
- Whether you have access to existing back-up supplies.
- The impact on staff travel arrangements.
- Encouraging flexibility in staff working practices, including increased working from home, car sharing and the use of public transport by staff.

3.17. In the event of very significant fuel disruption, the Government may implement the National Emergency Plan for Fuel, which would prioritise transport fuel resources to blue light organisations and other essential service providers, with the possibility of rationing supply to retail customers.

How would a temporary disruption to gas supplies affect your organisation?

3.18. Organisations should prepare for loss of gas supplies, which may occur following a failure or severe damage at a main gas terminal. Industrial accidents can cause short-term losses to localities; however, supply should normally be restored within days. Organisations can prepare for a loss of gas supplies by considering:

- Availability of alternative heating sources.
- Alternative methods of working such as closure of non-essential premises and movement of essential services to unaffected locations.

3.19. Loss of gas supplies could also lead to loss of electricity (with associated consequences as described above).

How would a loss of telecommunications affect your organisation?

3.20. Many organisations use telecommunication services that are reliant on the same physical infrastructure, technology and suppliers. Organisations should prepare for concurrent disruption to mobile phones and landline networks, messaging systems, internet access and video conferencing lasting up to five days. Organisations can help themselves prepare for such disruption by:

- Avoiding reliance on a single technical solution (for example, not relying solely on mobile phones for critical communications).
- Maintaining up-to-date contact details to ensure non-standard communication methods can be employed.
- Focusing on identification and maintenance of critical users' access to communications where possible.

How would your organisation cope with the loss of, or disruption to, IT systems?

3.21. Most organisations today rely on some form of IT system to perform their critical activities. To prepare for possible disruption to these systems, organisations may wish to consider:

- Which IT systems are needed to carry out critical activities.
- What information is needed to carry out critical activities.
- How this information is stored and how it is accessed.
- Maintaining the same technology at different locations that will not be affected by the same disruption.
- Ensuring data is backed-up and copies are kept securely off site.

Does your organisation have plans in place to cope with the disruption affecting key suppliers or partners?

3.22. Even if your organisation is not directly affected by an emergency, disruption to key suppliers or partners can have significant effects on your business. To minimise the impact of this disruption you may wish to consider:

- Identifying the key suppliers or partners who you depend upon to undertake your critical activities.
- Determining whether your business has any reciprocal arrangements with other organisations.

- Checking whether suppliers have arrangements in place to sustain their own service provision.
- Identifying alternative sources of supplies.

3.23. Additional guidance on how to develop business continuity plans is available on the Government's Direct Gov Website²⁰.

The Emergency Planning College runs courses on risk assessment and BCM.

Further information:

More information on how businesses can prepare for emergencies is available on the following websites.

General advice:

UK Resilience

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience.aspx

Wales Resilience

www.walesresilience.org

Scottish Preparing for Emergencies and BCM Guidance

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/emergencies

Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies

www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/emergencies

British Standards Institution

www.bsigroup.co.uk/bs25999

Emergency Planning College

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/epcollege.aspx>

Specific advice across the UK:

Road traffic

www.highways.gov.uk

www.trafficscotland.org

www.roadsni.gov.uk

Rail

www.nationalrail.co.uk

www.translink.co.uk

Fuel and gas

www.berr.gov.uk

www.detini.gov.uk

Electricity

www.berr.gov.uk

www.detini.gov.uk

Water supply

www.defra.gov.uk

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

www.sepa.org.uk

www.drdni.gov.uk

www.niwater.com

Food

www.food.gov.uk

Human diseases

www.dh.gov.uk

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

www.scot.nhs.uk

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

www.publichealth.hscni.net

www.hscni.net

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/pandemicflu/guidance/business.aspx

²⁰

www.direct.gov.uk/en/Governemntcitizensandrights/Dealingwithemergencies/Preparingforemergencies

Animal diseases

www.defra.gov.uk

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/animal-welfare/Diseases

www.dardni.gov.uk

Telecommunications and IT

www.cpni.gov.uk

Health and safety

www.hse.gov.uk

www.hseni.gov.uk

Schools

www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools

www.deni.gov.uk

Severe weather

www.metoffice.gov.uk

Flooding

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

www.sepa.org.uk

www.riversagencyni.gov.uk

Fire

www.communities.gov.uk/fire

Useful telephone numbers:**Floodline (England and Wales)**

0845 988 1188

Flood Incident Line (Northern Ireland)

0300 2000 100

**Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Floodline service**

0845 988 1188

Highways Agency – 24 hours traffic

08700 660 115

Highways Agency Information Line

08457 50 40 30

Traffic Scotland

0800 028 1414

Traffic Watch (Northern Ireland)

0845 712 3321

National Rail Enquiries

08457 48 49 50

Translink (Northern Ireland)

028 9066 6630

Foreign Office & Commonwealth Office

Travel Advice

0870 606 0290

NHS Direct (England & Wales)

0845 46 47

NHS 24 (Scotland)

08454 24 24 24