

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR SMALL BUSINESS FOR TORNADO SEASON

Don't leave your business metaphorically scrambling to get to safety during a devastating tornado. It is important to prepare yourself and your employees for disaster. This is especially true during large-scale natural disasters.



Review your Business Continuity plan.

Tornadoes have winds that can reach up to 200mph and paths of destruction a mile wide.

Summer is here, which means it's tornado season in Indiana. Chances are, you're prepared for tornadoes at home. You've known what to do during a tornado since you were a child. Go to the basement. Go to a hallway. Avoid windows. Cover your head and face. Keep flashlights in strategic places, just in case the lights go out. Maybe you even have a battery operated radio for keeping up with weather announcements during the storm. Do you have this same automatic, practiced routine for your business?

Don't leave your business metaphorically scrambling to get to safety during a devastating tornado. It is important to prepare yourself and your employees for disaster. This is especially true during large-scale natural disasters. "Tornadoes are nature's most violent storm, with winds that can reach over 200 mph and with paths of destruction more than one mile wide and 50 miles long."

Prepare the Space

During the summer, it is particularly important to clear the outside of your property of dead trees, old tree limbs, and other risky or unsecured objects. Inside your building, make sure that walkways are always clear. Strictly adhere to fire safety rules - you'll be safer in the long run.

Next, do a walkthrough of your space. Which area offers the greatest safety during a tornado? Will it fit all employees and customers? Large basements are the best option. Hallways will work, too. Just like at home, stay away from rooms with windows or outside walls. Whichever place you deem safest, make sure to keep an emergency pack nearby. Stock a standard backpack with a first aid kit, flashlights, bottles of water, an AM/FM radio, and charged battery packs for cell phones.

Prepare the People

Once you've decided on a safe space inside the office, let your employees know. Make sure every employee knows where the emergency supplies are stored, and how to use the supplies inside.

Create a phone tree for you and your team. If a storm hits in the middle of the night, it's important that you can contact your employees to make sure they're safe - and how you'd like to handle the morning after a tornado. Are there any local support efforts that you'd like you and your staff to be a part of in the event of a city-wide disaster?

Decide on a work from home policy. If road conditions (or a destroyed office) are keeping your staff from getting to work, make sure they can work from home (if they don't have their own cleanup to handle). Once you have as much staff

deployed as possible, let your customers know you are still open for business. Call them. Email them. Send out blasts on Facebook. Tell your customers that you will be working for them all day long.

Prepare the Business

You've done everything you can to protect your office building and your team in the event of a disaster. But that won't save your business if your company's products and data are destroyed.

Review your business insurance coverage. After a tornado hits is too late to ask what your insurance covers. Keep a detailed catalog of your inventory with cost estimates. This will help make your insurance claim way easier.

Review your Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery plans. Be 100% sure that your data is being backed up - frequently and redundantly. Test the backups. Ask for updates from your IT support every month on these backups (if they don't already provide them for you). Implement a Disaster Recovery device that allows you to run your business in the cloud in the event your office building is unusable. Test this, too.

The Aftermath

After a tornado hits, you won't have any time to plan anything. So, hopefully, you've got all the complicated stuff sorted out beforehand and you can focus on recovery. Get in contact with your insurance agent as soon as possible to file a claim if necessary. Next, contact your IT support to initiate the recovery sequence of your Business Continuity Plan.

As a reminder, do not touch downed power lines or objects touching the downed power lines. Also, use caution when clearing debris. Gloves and closed-toe shoes are recommended in case of sharp objects like broken glass.

If you have any questions regarding business continuity or Business Continuity Plans, give Preferred IT a call. We specialize in helping businesses stay afloat no matter how rough the future seems.

Be 100% sure that your data is being backed up frequently and redundantly.

FREE CYBERSECURITY AUDIT AVAILABLE NOW

At no cost or obligation, our highly skilled team of IT pros will come to your office and conduct a comprehensive cyber security audit to uncover loopholes in your company's IT security. After the audit is done, we'll prepare a customized "Report Of Findings" that will reveal specific vulnerabilities and provide a Prioritized Action Plan for getting these security problems addressed fast. This report and action plan should be a real eye opener for you since almost all of the businesses we've done this for discover they are completely exposed to various threats in a number of areas.

To get started and claim your free assessment, call our office at 260-440-7377.

Educating yourself is important, but we've often found that people need to be reminded more than they need to be taught.



Daily Habits That Are Killing Your Work-Life Balance

Being passionate and dedicated to the work you do is a surefire path to success. But in the lives of many driven people, there comes a time when work begins to overtake other aspects of your life that are vital to living a full, happy, healthy existence. Here are five habits you're probably practicing that are preventing you from achieving that fabled work-life balance.

1. SUPERHERO SYNDROME

Just because you're a top performer doesn't mean you should act the hero. Ruthlessly prune extra work to all but the most critical of projects. As they say, there will always be more work – don't let it take over every moment of your day.

2. ARTIFICIAL URGENCY

Create very specific ways to determine the actual priority of each project, markers that indicate whether taking a few extra days on something will actually affect your business.

3. UNDEFINED BOUNDARIES

When we take work home, we may feel like we're staying on top of everything, but in fact, without strict compartmentalization between work and life, neither is able to reach the heights that true focus will deliver. Draw a line in the sand and stick to it.

4. NO BUFFER

In order to even out your workload, you need to leave some space in your schedule for unanticipated events. One way to fix this is to create a 50% extra window of time for everything you need to accomplish.

5. CHASING TIME

It's easy to constantly focus on what's next, feeling as if you're always behind the ball. But it's vital that you commit to living in the moment as much as possible. And whatever you do, don't forget that your mental health is just as important as that pile of work you have waiting on your desk.

There will always be more work – don't let it take over every moment of your day.

PREFERRED IT SECURITY SPOTLIGHT

MAKE CYBER SECURITY PART OF YOUR COMPANY POLICY

If your business is going to survive a digital onslaught, safe online practices for your employees need to be more than a recommendation. They need to be mandatory company policies. Every new and existing employee needs to know what's expected of them and what the consequences will be if they deviate from guidelines. For example, when an update comes through for a key piece of software, it needs to be installed immediately. Have a set procedure in place for them to follow if they encounter a suspicious e-mail or potentially malicious link. These and other practices, when set in stone, ensure that employees remain personally invested in protecting your company.

The best way to suss out any employee vulnerabilities, though, will always be to do a thorough security audit of all your systems. This means investigating the hardware and software you're using on a daily basis, sure, but most importantly, you need to analyze the habits of your personnel and whether or not they're complying with your high standards of cyber security.

As they say, forewarned is forearmed. This is never truer than when defending your business from data breaches. With comprehensive cyber security awareness training, outlining everything from the biggest digital threats to post-breach best practices, you can turn your biggest security liability into your greatest defense. If employees know the ins and outs of hackers' tricks, it becomes exponentially more difficult for hackers to trick them and find a way into your network.

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