

A photograph of a car almost completely submerged in a deep snowdrift. Only the roof, a side-view mirror, and a portion of a wheel are visible. The side mirror is black and reflects a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The snow is thick and white, covering the car and the surrounding area. In the top right corner, there is a blue geometric overlay consisting of various shades of blue triangles.

Disaster Recovery **PLANNING**

Prevention is always better than cure.

Disaster recovery planning is the creation of a process to follow in the event of a disaster. The development and the maintenance of a disaster recovery plan isn't something that should be left until the last minute; **an incident could affect your business at any time.**

Prevention is always better than cure, and being prepared gives your stakeholders, employees, suppliers and customers the peace of mind they deserve. For mission critical firms gold plated levels of contingency may be required, whereas near gold plated levels may be more suitable for others and are available to everyone, at a fraction of the cost.

Many of our customer's communication systems are mission critical to their business, so it is vital that their communications remain uninterrupted at all times. In a telecoms environment there should always be a contingency plan in place for unexpected eventualities such as:

- Natural disasters
- Epidemics such as Coronavirus
- Access to your offices is prevented
- LAN/WAN attack
- Network supplier failure
- Transport or power disruption

This guide will provide a useful checklist and reference of technology aspects of disaster recovery for the majority of SME businesses. There are likely to be points that aren't covered, as each organisation has its own unique characteristics and priorities that will need to be accounted for.

Benefits of disaster recovery planning

- ✓ Provides a detailed step-by-step plan to get your business back on its feet quickly and efficiently
- ✓ Lessened business interruption reducing low productivity
- ✓ Ensures that you have a backup of data, information, documents and asset records
- ✓ Improved customer service and competitor advantage as disaster recovery planning proves reliability of service
- ✓ Minimises financial impact as down periods are significantly reduced
- ✓ Regulatory compliance and lower insurance premiums



Telecommunications areas to consider

Power backup

- Power backup should cover your system for at least four hours of standby power, so that your employees can continue to talk to customers in power down mode. There are usually a lot of calls that need to be made when the power is off in order to rectify the problem and deal with client calls.
- Remember to provide battery backup for any devices that require power, in the event of power failure, especially for business critical applications. When selecting the size of your backup system you should consider your company's anticipated growth and also that over the years batteries begin to degrade.
- Install protection against lightning damage with appropriate surge protection and by fusing any external cable runs.

Configuration

- There should be a process in place to ensure that the phone system configuration is backed up in case of major failure. The same goes for any applications that run in conjunction with the phone system such as call management, CTI and contact centre applications. If you don't have a reasonably up-to-date backup, your maintainer may charge you for the reinstallation.



Network services areas to consider

- Advertise the phone numbers of your major departments such as accounts, sales, customer service etc. via appropriate non geographic numbers. M12 Solutions can provide you with your own portal so you can instantly access and amend the routing of your calls to alternative destinations, such as mobiles.
- Work with a SIP provider who can divert DDI numbers as well as the main number to an alternative disposition in case of failure of the telephone system, so that all calls can still answered.
- Installing an active/standby circuit that has resilience built in at network level, will reduce the risks of something physical failing either onsite or at network level.
- Install a second FTTP or Leased Line to act as a backup to your primary internet access.

Datacomms areas to consider

- Have a secure location for your daily data backup to reside on site and your weekly and monthly backup to be securely available off site just in case you have a major disaster such as a fire or burglary.
- Have a server and application environment spreadsheet maintained and up-to-date which encompasses all of your owned licensing, support agreements and hardware inventory, with contact information and locate this securely. If the worst was to happen in a disaster the IT team can replicate and rebuild quickly.
- Install a UPS to provide managed shutdown of your servers in the event of power failure.

Building in resilience

- Have some key individuals set up as home workers for voice via Voice over IP and data via VPN access so that if they are unable to travel they are able to act as if they are in the office.
- Ensure users know how to transfer calls to voicemail and to mobiles, sounds basic but test your workforce.
- Have your intranet hosted off site so that in the event of a major failure your staff can see via the internet what your instructions are and you can work as a virtual business.
- Ask your suppliers and main customers for their opinions regarding your disaster recovery plans. You may find they can give you some useful pointers to include; after all they would be taking the brunt of the impact of turmoil in your business.

Testing the plan

- Set a date for an appropriate test to try out different scenarios. The main two to rehearse are:
- Employees not being able to get into the office. For example, heavy snow or a chemical spillage on a main access road.
- Power and / or Internet failure.

**For advice
on protecting your
business please call
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