



EMERGENCY PLAN TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

Howard County is no stranger to emergencies caused by natural and human-caused hazards, including but not limited to: severe winter weather, utility disruptions, transportation hazards, flooding, and cyber security concerns. Consider how these emergencies may affect your ability to do business (e.g., a power outage may inhibit your ability to accept credit cards). For more information, [visit the Ready HoCo Page on our website](#).

PLAN TO STAY IN BUSINESS

Planning before a disaster will help you return to operations more quickly. Start by taking the following steps:

- Identify operations that are critical to business functions and recovery.
- Determine which staff, materials, procedures, contacts, and equipment are necessary to keep your organization operating.
- Make a list of your most important contacts, clients, and stakeholders, and plan ways to communicate with them during and after a disaster.
- Coordinate with vendors, suppliers, and others you depend on to do business.
- Keep copies of important records you may need to rebuild your business in a waterproof, fireproof, portable container. Keep a second set at an off-site location.

Key Business Functions

Key business functions are activities that are important to your organization's survival and to the continuation of business operations. These can include insurance claims, opening a new checking account, etc. The Emergency Plan Toolkit can help you list what your organization's key business functions are, who is responsible for these functions, and their contact information.

Critical Employees

Before a disaster strikes, it's a good idea to make emergency planning a shared responsibility. Pick employees that will be responsible for the safety and well-being of your organization and record their information on this sheet.

Important Documents

Every organization has important documents that they need in order to operate. Review the list on the Toolkit to ensure you have copies of these documents and store them somewhere safe. Make additional copies and store them at a back-up location.

PLAN TO STAY IN TOUCH

Having up-to-date contact information for your employees is crucial, especially when an emergency occurs. It's important to talk to your employees often about what to do before, during, and after an emergency. Set up a call tree, an email alert, or a call-in voice recording to communicate with employees. When creating a plan, consider your employees' needs (including disabilities and access and functional needs).

You should also encourage employees to prepare for emergencies at home. Check out the following resources for more information about emergency preparedness:

- [Howard County Office of Emergency Management's Preparedness Resources](#)
 - [Maryland Department of Emergency Management's Private Sector Integration Program \(PSIP\)](#)
 - [FEMA's Preparedness Resources](#)
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PLAN TO TAKE ACTION

Every organization should have an emergency plan or continuity plan. Make sure you and your employees know what to do if disaster strikes. Make a plan that includes ways you will stay in touch, designate meeting places near your place of business and outside the area, and more. Record the plan on this sheet and communicate this plan with your employees.

PLAN TO PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT

External Contacts

All organizations rely on vendors, suppliers, resources, utility providers, etc., to help their business function during and after an emergency. In the Toolkit, make a list of these contacts, including your primary and secondary contacts, so you and your employees know who to call if business is disrupted.

Assets

Think about what you will need to help your business function during and after an emergency. The Toolkit provides a list that includes any physical assets ranging from office supplies to equipment. Here are some other steps that you can take to protect your company's physical and virtual assets:

- Review your insurance coverage and understand what your policy covers. Consider expanding your insurance to include coverage for direct and indirect costs associated with a disaster.
 - Examples of direct costs include hazard-specific property insurance (e.g., fire, flood), and data breach and cyber liability insurance.
 - Examples of indirect costs include business interruption/ continuation policy insurance, business income insurance, and extra expense insurance.
 - Think about what equipment is necessary for the survival of your business and where you will obtain replacement parts if it is damaged.
 - Every organization depends on electricity, gas, telecommunications, sewers, and other utilities. Have a plan in place in case these services are disrupted.
 - Protect your data and information technology systems. Create backups of all of your information and store copies in a flood and fireproof container.
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KNOW HOW TO RESPOND

Your employees need to know what emergency supplies to have on hand if they are ordered to evacuate or if they are required to stay where they are (i.e., shelter in place). The Toolkit provides an overview of what supplies are essential and includes a checklist of other items that one may need in an emergency.

Once these sheets are completed, save and store them somewhere safe. Make additional copies that you can keep at an off-site location. You should review these planning sheets on a regular basis, and make updates as needed.

If you must evacuate:

- Evacuation plans are specific to each building. If you are a tenant in the building, coordinate evacuation plans with your building manager.
- All employees should have a preparedness kit, or a "Go Bag." This is a collection of items you may need in an evacuation. A Go Bag should be packed in a sturdy, easy-to-carry container, such as a backpack.

- Visit the [Howard County Office of Emergency Management's preparedness website](#) or refer to the Disaster Recovery Kit checklist in this folder to learn more about what items should be included in your employees' Go Bags.
- Post maps of your building's evacuation routes for your business. Identify and label entry/exit points on the maps and throughout the building. Plan two different ways out of the building.
- Pick two places to meet: one near your business, and one outside of the immediate area.

If you must stay (shelter in place):

- If it is not safe to evacuate, you may need to shelter in place. This may be as simple as remaining in your office or store while officials clear hazards from the area.
- Identify a room with few doors or windows to shelter in place. Ideally, the room should allow at least 10 square feet per person.
- Stay tuned to local communication outlets for updates from emergency officials.