



Small Business Continuity Preparedness Guide

Purpose

This resource guide is designed to help businesses (large and small), non-profits, faith-based organizations, and other non-governmental entities prepare for emergencies. Everyone in a community has a role to play in an emergency. An emergency might also impact personnel or customers, indirectly affecting the organization. By preparing for emergencies, organizations can reduce the loss of lives, equipment, and assets when an incident happens, making the whole community more resilient.

The Maryland Business Emergency Operation Center (MBEOC) Partner Preparedness Guide is a community preparedness campaign established to increase awareness and drive action by preparing community organizations for all-hazard emergencies and catastrophic events. The campaign is a product of the MD Ready program. To help increase the preparedness of businesses and other non-governmental organizations, **this resource guide is divided into the following three sections:**

- **Preparedness and Emergency Plan Development Considerations:** This section provides a general overview of developing a Disaster Plan. It includes guidance and tools to walk users through the basics of emergency planning.
- **Maryland Threats and Hazards:** This section provides additional preparedness considerations for hazards, such as fires, floods and acts of violence.
- **Resources, Tools and Templates:** This section provides additional resources that might be used to develop emergency plans and increase preparedness. It includes web links to tools, information and resources.

Definition of Private Sector

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines the private sector as: Organizations and entities that are not part of any government structure. The private sector includes for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, formal and informal structures, commerce and industry, private emergency response organizations, and private voluntary organizations. Private sector collaboration at the local, state, tribal, and federal level has profound long term benefits to the entire nation. FEMA recognizes that the nation's vast network of businesses, industry, academia, trade associations, and other non-governmental organizations are equally responsible partners in every phase of emergency management which includes preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. Together, government entities and the private sector can learn from one another and what works well in the field, offering relevant lessons learned and best practices.

Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism (GOSV)

Emergencies in your community may impact your store or office, cause utility outages, or prevent employees from being able to commute to work. While every emergency is unique, organizations are better prepared by planning for emergencies, putting procedures in place, and practicing those procedures.

Following a disaster, the private sector, non-governmental and faith-based organizations provide critical resources to communities that help save lives, protect and help facilitate community and economic recovery. The best way to protect your business or organization and help your community is to have a plan and to prepare your business and employees.



Did You Know?

Congress has found that 43% of businesses that close following a natural disaster never reopen. An additional 29% of businesses close down permanently within two years. This loss of jobs and decrease in tax revenues impacts the entire community. Organizations should prepare for disasters ahead of time in order to reduce the overall loss to the business, provide safety for visitors and employees, and reduce delays of service. Having an emergency plan for your organization will significantly increase your preparedness for all types of emergencies.

As your organization begins developing your emergency plan, conducting a business impact analysis or developing a continuity of operations plan, key considerations include:

Human Resources	Business Continuity	Physical Resources
How could a disaster impact your employee, customers or workplace?	What do you need to continue to serve your customers if your workplace is closed?	How could you continue providing your services if the area around your workplace is closed?

Considerations for each of these areas are included in the preparedness steps outlined below.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish a preparedness planning team	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan for continuity of operations within your organization
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine the hazards and risks for your organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prepare and train your employees and volunteers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop an emergency action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	Create an emergency go-kit for your organization
<input type="checkbox"/>	Conduct a business impact analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop a communications strategy

Assemble & Establish a Planning Team:

The first step to developing a disaster plan is to assemble a planning team. The size of the team may vary depending on your organization's operations, number of facilities, and available resources. It should be big enough to represent the operations of your organization but small enough to allow close collaboration. Most importantly the planning team should be empowered by leadership personnel and be provided with the authority to implement safety plans and take protective actions.

- Consider including the following on your planning team:
 - Representation from each department. Diverse perspectives will ensure that the plan considers all areas of your organization.
 - Representatives from local first responders. Fire department, law enforcement or emergency management representatives will be able to provide additional information specific to local plans and hazards and additional subject matter expertise to refine the plan.
 - Individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. This diverse representation on the planning team will ensure that your plan meets these needs.
 - Organizations with multiple facilities or multiple floors should consider establishing safety coordinators at each facility and on each floor to ensure that proper protective actions are being taken across every aspect of the organization.
- If a disaster occurs that impacts your organization, this planning team will be vital in implementing your plan.



Determine the Hazards, Risks or Threats for Your Organization. An important step in developing a disaster plan is to understand the different types of risks, hazards and threats that might impact your organization. Your community's local emergency management agency or fire department will have a clear idea of what might impact the community, and will have a strong grasp on what your organization can do to minimize the impact of those risks.

- They will know if your facility is located in an area that frequently floods, and will be able to provide information on how to minimize or mitigate against the impact of flooding.
- They will also be able to provide you with details on how your community has been impacted by past disasters. Requesting a copy of the local hazard mitigation plan for the area surrounding your organization will allow you to more fully understand what hazards your organization is at risk for and how you can take steps to be more prepared. Request that local officials provide you with real-time information during an emergency event.

Cyberattack	Pandemic	Fuel Shortage	Road Closures	Flood / Severe Storm
Terrorism	Foodborne Illness	Communication Failure	Legislation Changes	Hurricane
Nuclear Explosion	Bird Flu	Equipment Failure	Drought	Tornado
Civil Disturbance	Insect Infestation	Water Contamination	Extreme Heat/ Cold	Winter Storm
Active Shooter	Poisoning	Prolonged Power Outage	Fire/ Wildfire	Supply Chain Failure

- Consider what industry specific hazards and projected climate change impacts that may affect your organization.
- Think about how plans might be different depending on whether your organization is open or closed at the time of impact.
- Consider the physical location and proximity of potential hazards nearby. An incident at a neighboring chemical plant, prison, transportation route or other high threat facility may impact your organization's operations.

Prioritizing Threats: A way to measure which threats an organization should prioritize is by using a weighted scale to assign a level of various factors, examples could include: probability, risk to life, potential damage to property, spatial impacts, warning, and duration. Using this simple tool will help visualize the biggest threats to your organization. Spatial can be how big of an impacted area from one room, to the whole facility, to the community, or broader. Advanced notice allows for preparations. Duration can be either how long the incident will last or how long the impacts will likely be felt. Do ensure that all threats are measured using the same considerations and scale.

Index	Probability (3x)	Human Impact (3x)	Property Impact (3x)	Spatial (2x)	Advanced Notice (1x) in Hours	Duration (1x) in Hours
1	Unlikely	Minor	Minor	Negligible	More than 24	Less than 1
2	Possible	Limited	Limited	Small	Less than 24	Less than 6
3	Likely	Critical	Critical	Moderate	Less than 6	Less than 24
4	Highly Likely	Catastrophic	Catastrophic	Large	Less than 1	More than 24

Whole Community Planning Considerations:

Please take into consideration any special needs considerations when planning. This applies to your organization's employees, clients, customers, and visitors to your facility. Take into account physical, invisible, developmental disabilities. Also account for temporary disabilities such as a person with temporary mobility and limitations to include broken limb, surgery recovery, pregnancy. Additionally, consider any language barriers that may need to be addressed for most effective communication during an incident.

Conduct a Business Impact Analysis: After you have understood what hazards might impact your organization, it is important to conduct a Business Impact Analysis (BIA). A BIA helps organizations understand the potential results of a disaster. Nonprofits and faith-based organizations also benefit from conducting a BIA because it looks at the overall impact of the disaster and how your organization works. Organizations should take into consideration what types of impact an emergency can have, and use the analysis to determine the best strategies for recovery. The analysis should look at both financial considerations and process considerations in the BIA.

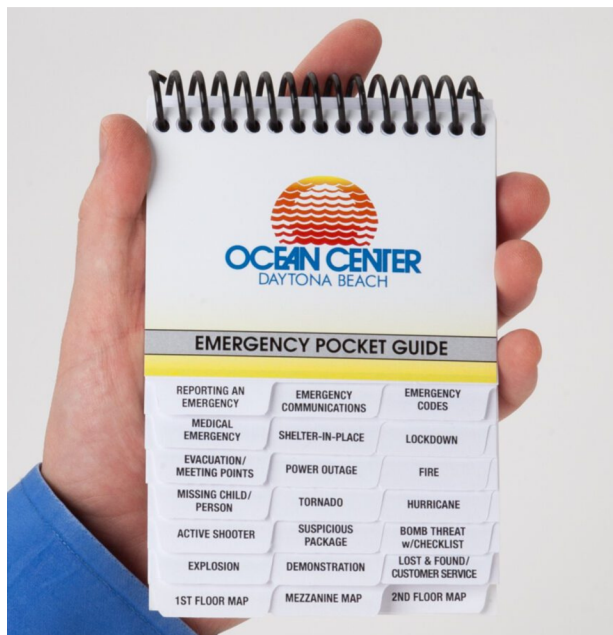
Financial Considerations:

- What is your organization's cash reserve?
- How many payroll periods can your organization meet with no income?
- How many vendors can you pay with no income? Which vendors?
- How might your expenses increase? Will you be able to pay overtime for the labor required to recover your business?

Business Process Considerations:

- What are the key resources necessary for your organization to be operational (i.e. power, water, sewer, computers, internet, databases, phones, etc.)?
- Within how many hours following an emergency does your organization want to be operational again?
- What equipment or resources are necessary to keep your organization operational?
- Make sure your business has redundancy in place with your suppliers. If your outside suppliers are impacted by a disaster or emergency, what plans do you have to prevent your supply chain from being interrupted?

Remember when conducting this analysis that there is a time-based element to every disaster. This includes when the event happens, and for how long it occurs. For example, a retail small business might be impacted by a severe winter storm that stops your store from receiving goods during the holiday season. While this is a short-term issue, the timing might have a significant impact on the business as it will decrease or interrupt sales. In another example, a severe summer storm could have a significant impact on a non-profit that facilitates summer programs for children. To the greatest extent possible, organizations should use this analysis to quantify the overall impact on the organization to help identify strategies to return to normal. A tool to help facilitate [conducting a BIA](#) can be found on www.ready.gov.



Develop an Emergency Action Plan: A basic way to prepare your organization for an emergency is to develop an emergency action plan. This plan outlines the things your organization needs to do to protect employees, volunteers, customers and others who might be at your physical location during an emergency. If you have more than one physical location, each site should have a copy of the emergency action plan. An emergency action plan is designed to help your organization both during and immediately following a disaster. The United States Department of Labor Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) provides additional information on [developing emergency action plans](#).

All organizations should include the following:

- **How to report an emergency.** Your emergency action plan should identify how an emergency is reported, and to whom. In addition, it should also provide information on how that notification will be provided to individuals at your location.
- **Policies for evacuation and sheltering in place.** Consider what conditions would result in an evacuation of your facilities, and what conditions would result in the need to shelter in place. For all emergencies, identify who will give the instructions to evacuate or shelter in place. Identify staff or volunteers who will help facilitate evacuation.
- The policy should identify how you will account for staff, volunteers, customers or others.
 - If you need to shelter in place because the hazardous conditions outside would put employees, volunteers and customers in harm's way, ensure that you are able to support all persons who might be at your facility. Remember that an emergency can happen when your facility is at peak capacity. If that were to happen, your organization may need to keep many people safe for hours or days.
- **Identify evacuation routes.** For an evacuation, consider all possible routes from your facility. If you are in a multi-story building, consider working with your building manager to identify the best evacuation routes. Identify accessible routes as well for individuals with disabilities or who may have limited mobility. Identify an area outside of your facility that can be designated as a safe meeting place where employees can be accounted for and receive information.
- **Internal and external communication.** Every organization should understand how to obtain situational awareness from public safety agencies during a disaster or emergency. This could include turning on a radio or television to get more information. Additionally, each organization should establish a communication plan to guide their internal communication with staff and organizational stakeholders.

Plan for Continuity of Operations: Continuity of Operations (COOP) is defined as activities that occur to help the essential functions of an organization continue. When a disaster happens, the day-to-day operations of the organization can be interrupted. COOP planning helps ensure that, when those interruptions occur, the organization can still continue to provide the goods and services it needs to and that the organization can more quickly recover. A COOP plan is designed to address these types of disruptions:

- Denial of access to a facility or facility damage
- Reduced workforce
- Communication disruption
- Equipment or systems failure
- Supply chain interruptions

A COOP plan will help your organization develop work around strategies when facilities, employees, or systems are impacted by a disaster. When developing your organization's COOP plan, it is imperative that the following planning considerations are addressed:

- **Identify your organization's essential functions:** Essential functions are those functions that enable your organization to remain operational and provide services in times of an emergency. If you are a private sector manufacturing organization, essential functions might include your physical location, equipment, and the technology necessary to operate that equipment. If you are a faith-based organization, essential functions might include the physical location, assets and furniture, and key staff.
- **Establish delegations of authority** Delegations of authority specify who is authorized to make decisions or act on behalf of senior leaders within the organization. Delegations are used for specific purposes during emergencies and may require legal and/or board review. This includes how your organization will delegate the authority required to fulfill organizational key activities such as payroll and signing checks and hiring and firing employees.

- **Determine orders of succession.** Orders of succession are an essential part of your organization's ability to ensure that your employees know who assumes the authority and responsibility for leadership positions within the organization if current leadership is incapacitated or becomes otherwise unavailable during disaster or emergency situations. Having pre-defined orders of succession in place, allows for predefined and seamless transition of leadership, when necessary.
- **Determine continuity locations.** During an emergency, key facilities may be damaged or severely impacted to where they cannot be immediately re-opened. Therefore, it is critical that your organization determine ahead of time a continuity location or multiple locations that can be accessed and used for up to 30 days following an emergency. It is imperative to select a continuity facility in advance and to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with the vendor or company providing the space. This will allow your organization the ability to continue providing necessary essential functions and services to keep the organization operational and lessen the overall impact to your business. Some organizations allow employees to telecommute from home until the primary worksite is available. This may or may not be an option for your organization, but if so make sure to work with your information technology department to ensure that your system can adequately handle the proper number of telecommuters at any given time.
- **Ensure interoperable communications.** Interoperable communications are communications that provide your organization the capability to perform essential functions until normal operations can be resumed. Interoperable communications also provide the ability to communicate with personnel, other agencies, and organizations. Any location being considered as an alternate facility must have interoperable communications so that employees can perform normal and assigned job functions. Your organization should consider the following: internet and email, landline phones, cellular phones, texting, satellite phones, ham radio operators, and carriers.
- **Safeguard vital records.** Vital records are those electronic and hardcopy documents, references and records needed to support an organization's essential functions during an emergency situation. Vital records consist of emergency operating records, legal/financial and human resources records.

- **Maintain an inventory of all equipment.** Develop an inventory list of all equipment owned and operated by your organization. Develop a maintenance schedule for all equipment, as well as manufacturer and service contact information. Keep this information updated, in case equipment is damaged or inoperable during an emergency.
- **Develop a backup schedule for computer files.** Keep an electronic backup of all tax, accounting, payroll and production records, and customer and supplier data off-site. Make sure to also keep copies of all paper and computer files in an accessible but offsite location. Install anti-virus and firewall software on your organization's computers to improve cyber security.
- **Contact your insurance agent.** Review your insurance coverage ahead of time to make sure your organization has adequate coverage. Get additional coverage for "all-hazard" situations like flooding events or hail damage. Maintain copies of critical documents, such as finance records and receipts of major purchases.
- **Make plans regarding customers.** Determine the likelihood of customers being present at your business during a disaster situation. Develop an emergency evacuation plan for customers and review it regularly with employees. Correctly label all exit locations for the building with proper signage and posted evacuation routes.

Prepare and Train Your Employees and Volunteers. Your employees and volunteers play a key role in the preparedness of your organization. A disaster that impacts your organization will also impact employees and volunteers. In some cases, they may be at your location when the disaster occurs. In other cases, the emergency event may impact the entire community, which means that employee and volunteer homes and families are also impacted.

Training is essential to ensure that everyone knows what to do when there is an emergency, or disruption of operations. Everyone needs training to become familiar with protective actions for life safety (e.g., evacuation, shelter, shelter-in-place and lockdown). Review protective actions for life safety and conduct evacuation drills ("fire drills") as required by local regulations. Sheltering and lockdown drills should also be conducted.

Employees and volunteers should receive training to become familiar with safety, building security, information security and other loss prevention programs.

- Develop a basic training plan that considers who will be trained, who will do the training, what training activities will be used, when and where each session will take place, and how the session will be evaluated and documented.
- General training for all employees and volunteers should address: Individual roles and responsibilities; Information about threats, hazards and protective actions; Notification, warning and communications procedures; Means for locating family members in an emergency; Emergency response procedures; Evacuation, shelter and accountability procedures; Location and use of common emergency equipment; and Emergency shutdown procedures.
- Communicate regularly with employees, volunteers and clients before, during, and after an emergency. Use newsletters, staff meetings and other internal communication tools to communicate emergency plans and procedures. Use informal communication, such as short staff briefings or coffee break discussions, to teach employees and volunteers about the plan and protective actions.
- Consider providing training annually, as new employees are hired, or as new equipment is acquired. If you update your plans on an annual basis, ensure that training is provided on any changes to the plan.

In order for an employee to be ready to respond to an emergency impacting your organization, they need to know that their families are safe and taken care of. Therefore, promoting a culture of personal and family emergency planning and preparedness benefits the whole organization. Encourage your employees to develop a family emergency plan and to develop emergency kits for their home. The reality of an emergency situation is that your employees and volunteers and their families will likely not have access to everyday conveniences. To plan in advance, ask your employees to think through the details of their everyday life and the resources they will need for sustenance for up to 72 hours. Resources can be found [here](#).

In your workplace, you can also encourage your employees and volunteers to assemble an office emergency kit (go-kit) for themselves – a collection of items they may need in the event of an emergency or if required to evacuate the office facility. The emergency kit should be easily accessible and packed in a sturdy, easy-to-carry container such as a backpack. It should be stocked with necessary personal supplies and ready to go at all times in case of an emergency. Remind employees to account for personal items such as a change of clothes, hygiene items, medications, as well as keep a list of medications, including dosage information and their physician's contact information in their kit.

Create an Emergency Go-Kit for Your Business. One additional step that your organization can take to be prepared for an emergency is to develop a go-kit specific to your organization. A go-kit is a self-contained, portable stockpile of emergency supplies.

- For a business, this may include hard copies of critical business information, key contacts, and backups of important files, in addition to an offsite electronic backup system.
- For a faith-based organization, this may include contact information for a congregation and insurance information. This kit should include a copy of any emergency plans developed, including continuity of operations plans, communication plans, and call-down lists.
- Go-kits for administrators and other high-level staff should include information on how to turn off utilities, a calling tree, a whistle, a reunification plan, and a first-aid kit.

Go-kits are often stored in backpacks or duffle bags and placed in readily accessible and secure locations. The Emergency Response Team should select the supplies that are necessary in each kit. Emergency plans should reference the supplies and identify who is responsible for stocking and replenishing items.

In addition to developing go-kits for your business, consider creating a crisis box. A crisis box provides critical information to the Emergency Response Team. These should include relevant information and resources, including:

1. Incident Command System key responders' phone numbers	2. Important documents such as Insurance, Business License, etc
3. Staff Roster	4. Aerial photos of the facility
5. Facility Layout	6. List of individuals at the facility with special needs
7. Keys	8. Maps of surrounding neighborhood

Develop a Communications Strategy. Write a crisis communication plan that details how your organization will communicate with employees, local authorities, suppliers, customers, and others during and after a disaster. This communications strategy should include phone trees or other methods of notification, such as automated alert messaging systems. When developing this strategy, it is important to identify the targets for communication. This will vary depending on your organization.

Take Steps Now & Make Review Part of Regular Practice. In addition to maintaining a general action plan, organizations can take specific steps to prepare for the hazards that might impact day to day operations. This may include natural hazards, like fire, floods and tornadoes, widespread illness, and human-caused hazards like acts of violence. Below are some examples of steps you can take:

- **Fire.** Fires are one of the most common of all the hazards. Every year fires cause thousands of deaths and injuries and billions of dollars in property damage.

Consider the following when updating your plan:

- Meet with the fire department to talk about the community's fire response capabilities. Talk about your operations. And identify processes and materials that could cause or fuel a fire, or contaminate the environment in a fire.
 - Have your facility inspected for fire hazards. Ask about fire codes and regulations.
 - Ask your insurance carrier to recommend fire prevention and protection measures. Your carrier may also offer training.
 - Distribute fire safety information to employees and volunteers: how to prevent fires in the workplace, how to contain a fire, how to evacuate the facility, where to report a fire.
 - Instruct personnel to use the stairs — not elevators — in a fire. Instruct them to crawl on their hands and knees when escaping a hot or smoke-filled area.
 - Conduct evacuation drills. Post maps of evacuation routes in prominent places. Keep evacuation routes, including stairways and doorways, clear of debris.
 - Assign fire wardens for each area to monitor shutdown and evacuation procedures.
 - Establish procedures for the safe handling and storage of flammable liquids and gases. Establish procedures to prevent the accumulation of combustible materials.
 - Provide for the safe disposal of smoking materials.
 - Establish a preventive maintenance schedule to keep equipment operating safely.
 - Place fire extinguishers in appropriate locations & train employees how to use them.
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- **Flooding.** Floods are one of the most common and widespread of all natural disasters. Most communities in the United States can experience some degree of flooding after spring rains, heavy thunderstorms, or winter snow thaws. Most floods develop slowly over a period of days but flash floods caused by intense storm or dam failure can develop in a matter of minutes. At least 25 percent of businesses that close after events, like a flood, never reopen.

According to the U.S. government, the average commercial flood claim was over \$89,000 over the last five years. Flood insurance is the best way to protect your organization from devastating financial loss.

- Determine if your organization is located in a flood-prone area by visiting <http://www.floodsmart.gov> or asking your local emergency management office. Learning the history of flooding in your area and the elevation of your facility in relation to streams, rivers, and dams will help.
 - Have proper flood insurance. If your risk assessment and vulnerability assessment determined that you are at risk for flooding and not properly insured, contact your insurance agent and the National Flood Insurance Program.
 - Review the community's emergency plan and be familiar with evacuation routes and where to find higher ground in case of an emergency.
 - Identify records and equipment that can be moved to a higher location and make plans to move them in case of a flood.
 - Consider using backup systems in case of a flood. These include portable pumps to remove water, alternative power sources like generators or gasoline power pumps, and battery-powered emergency lighting.
 - Use emergency floodproofing measures. These include building walls with sandbags and constructing levees to keep flood waters away.
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- **Tornadoes.** Tornadoes are incredibly violent local storms that extend to the ground with whirling winds that can reach up to 300 mph. Tornadoes can uproot trees and buildings and turn harmless objects into deadly missiles in a matter of seconds. Damage paths can be in excess of one mile wide and 50 miles long. They occur with little to no warning.
 - Be familiar with the terms used to describe a tornado. A tornado watch means tornadoes are likely and be ready to take shelter. A tornado warning means a tornado has been sighted in the area or is indicated by radar and to take shelter immediately.
 - Establish procedures to inform personnel when tornado warnings are posted and how to respond.

- Make plans for evacuating personnel and volunteers away from lightweight modular offices or mobile home-size buildings. These structures offer no protections.
 - Ask your local emergency management office about the community's tornado warning system.
 - Designate shelter areas in your facility. The best protection is usually in an underground area, small interior rooms without windows, rooms with reinforced concrete or blocks with no windows and a heavy concrete floor, or protected areas away from doors and windows.
 - Avoid sheltering in auditoriums, cafeterias, and gymnasium-type rooms with flat, wide-span roofs because they are not considered safe.
 - Conduct tornado drills with your employees and volunteers and ensure they know where shelter areas are located.
- **Winter Storm.** Severe winter storms bring heavy snow, ice, strong winds, and freezing rain. Winter storms can prevent employees and customers from reaching the business, non-profit or faith-based organization, leading to a temporary shutdown until roads are cleared. Heavy snow and ice can also cause structural damage and power outages.
 - Understand the terms used to describe winter storms. A Winter Storm Watch means severe winter weather is possible, a Winter Storm Warning means severe winter weather is expected, a Blizzard Warning means severe winter weather with sustained winds of at least 35 mph is expected and a Traveler's Advisory means severe winter conditions may make driving difficult or dangerous.
 - Establish procedures to shut down your organization and release employees and volunteers if severe winter weather is expected.
 - Provide a backup power source for critical operations, like a generator. Arrange for snow and ice removal from parking lots, walkways, loading docks, and other important areas.
 - Store an emergency kit with food, water, blankets, battery powered radios, extra batteries, and other emergency supplies for employees, volunteers and customers that may become stranded at your facility.

- **Critical Infrastructure.** Any emergencies that include interruption or loss of a utility service, power source, information system, or equipment essential to keeping the business in operation.
 - Identify all critical operations including utilities, security and alarm systems, elevators, lighting, HVAC systems, manufacturing equipment, communication systems and transportation systems.
 - Determine the amount of impact of service disruption the business would face from an interruption or loss of service.
 - Ensure that key safety and maintenance personnel are thoroughly familiar with all building systems.
 - Establish procedures for restoring systems. Determine the need for backup systems and act accordingly.
 - Establish preventative maintenance schedules for all systems and equipment
- **Civil Disturbance.** First Amendment activities have the potential to disrupt business operations. By preparing ahead of time, you can better protect your employees, guests and property.
 - Sign up to receive real-time alerts from Maryland Business Emergency Operation Center (BEOC). The BEOC provides members with real-time updates, guidance and support for making business more resilient.
 - Determine what your staffing plan looks like if there is an event.
 - Keep your property safe. How will you secure your business if an event is imminent? Do you have operational cameras? Are you able to share video footage with law enforcement if an event occurs? Do you have sufficient Insurance?
- **Workplace Violence.** Acts of violence could happen within your organization or at your facility. These may include physical altercations to active shooter situations. Acts of violence may be targeted to organizational management or staff. They may also be targeted against a domestic partner or spouse. In addition, acts of violence could be incidental to the organization, meaning that the hazard occurs because of something happening in the neighborhood or at a nearby facility.

It is important to be familiar with and include acts of violence in your overall workplace emergency preparedness policies and plans.

- **See It.** The first step is to consider the range of potential emergency situations that may occur.
- **Assess It.** When assessing the risk, look at how likely it is that someone will get hurt, how badly they will get hurt and how many people may get hurt.
- **Fix It.** When possible, address issues that might result in violence in the workplace and develop action plans to minimize or eliminate risk.
- **Evaluate It.** Once the appropriate fix has been implemented, it is important to evaluate whether it has been successful in controlling the incident, or potential threat to the safety and security of others.

Active Shooter. When preparing for the possibility of active violence or an active shooter situation at your organization's facility, consider the following:

- Ensure your facility has at least two evacuation routes and post evacuation routes in conspicuous locations throughout the facility to increase youth awareness.
- Institute controls to entry ways, such as keys or security pass codes.
- Develop an active shooter training plan (recognizing the sound of gunshots, reacting quickly when gunshots are heard and/or when a shooting is witnessed, evacuating the area, hiding out, acting against the shooter as last resort, calling 911 and reacting when law enforcement arrives).
- Create an evacuation and hide out plan for active shooter situations. Taking action against the shooter is a last resort option if you are in imminent danger and cannot evacuate or hide out.
- When a hostile person(s) is actively causing deadly harm, posing imminent threat of deadly harm, or is barricaded within a building, the following procedures should be followed:
 - Initiate HARD Lockdown procedures.
 - If communication is available, call 9-1-1 or other appropriate emergency numbers.
 - Do not stay in open areas.
 - Do not sound the fire alarm. A fire alarm would signal the occupants in the rooms to evacuate the building and thus place them in potential harm as they attempted to exit.

- Lock all hallway doors, and barricade doors to the best of your ability using furniture.
- Raise blinds to exterior windows.
- Attempt to hide from the interior hallway door/window as much as possible.
- Try to stay calm and be as quiet as possible.
- Should an active shooter gain access to your facility: FIGHT and/or attempt to evacuate out of an exterior door if possible.
- If for some reason you are caught in an open area, such as a hallway or main congregation area, you must decide what action to take.
 - You can try to hide, but make sure it is a well-hidden space or you may be found as the intruder moves through the building looking for victims.
 - If you think you can safely make it out of the building by running, then do so. Keep any objects you can between you and the hostile person(s) while in the building. When away from the immediate area of danger, summon help any way you can and warn others.
 - The last option you have, if caught in an open area, may be to fight back. This is dangerous, but depending on your situation, this could be an option.
 - If you are caught by the intruder and are not going to fight back, follow their directions and don't look the intruder in the eyes.
- Responding Police will have their weapons drawn and ready for use. They do not know exactly who the shooter is and will probably point weapons at you. Remain calm and follow any directions they may give you. You may be asked questions, patted down, and given orders to exit.
- Responding Police are there to stop the active shooter as soon as possible. They will bypass injured people and will not help you escape. Only after the shooter is stopped will they begin to provide other assistance.
- If you come into possession of a weapon, do NOT carry or brandish it! Police may think you are the active shooter.
- Be prepared to provide first aid. Think outside the box. Shoes, laces and belts can be used to secure tourniquets. The actions you take immediately to treat victims may save their life.

- Once law enforcement arrives, obey all commands. This may involve your being handcuffed or made to put your hands in the air. This is done for safety reasons, and once circumstances are evaluated by law enforcement, they will give you further directions to follow.

Resources, Tools & Templates. There is an abundance of resources available to help you and your organization become well-prepared for emergencies. These resources include informational brochures, planning documents for workplace emergencies and evacuations, self-assessment tools that evaluate your level of preparedness and offer improvement tips, and step-by-step advice on how to create and maintain emergency management plans tailored to your needs.

- **American Red Cross [Ready Rating Website](#).** Ready Rating is a program that helps businesses; schools and organizations become prepared for disasters and other emergencies. All in one place, Ready Rating members have access to one-of-a-kind tools, resources, and information for evaluating and improving their ability to withstand disaster, maintain operations, and protect lives and property. Whether you are taking your first steps or have a fully functioning emergency management program, the Ready Rating program can help you achieve a higher level of preparedness.
- **FEMA Emergency Management [Guide for Business and Industry](#).** This guide provides step-by-step advice to organizations on how to create and maintain a comprehensive emergency management program. There are also additional planning guidance for [House of Worship](#) and [K-12 Schools & Institutions of Higher Education](#)
- **Ready.gov Website.** The Ready.gov website (www.ready.gov) includes a [section for business](#) that includes information on program management, planning, implementation, testing and exercises, program improvement, and testimonials.
- **OSHA - How to Plan for [Workplace Emergencies and Evacuations](#).** Designed to help you, the employer, plan for that possibility. The best way to protect yourself, your workers, and your business is to expect the unexpected and develop a well-thought out emergency action plan to guide you when immediate action is necessary.

- **Small Business Administration.** The US Small Business Administration provides resources specifically for small businesses to increase [preparedness](#).

Visit MDEM's [Whole Community Integration Branch Webpage](#) for more resources, information, and access to workshops, training, exercises and programs. Join one of Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) Programs and get access to **Maryland's Business Emergency Operation Center (MBEOC)** and other membership-only benefits. For more information on our programs please reach out to pssector@maryland.gov for businesses and npep.mdem@maryland.gov for faith-based and other nonprofits.