



NEWS RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

Release Date: 06-03-2010
Release Number: OP-ED Disaster Preparedness

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With predictions of an active hurricane season ahead, small business owners should be reminded that creating a strong disaster preparedness plan is crucial. Such a plan will help protect both owners and employees while ensuring that a business can bounce back as quickly as possible after a disaster strikes. And this is important, not just for those in hurricane-prone regions. It's important for small businesses everywhere, because a man-made or natural disaster could strike any business at any time.

A recent survey by Agility Recovery Solutions shows that about 75 percent of small business owners had a plan to get employees back to work in the days after a business interruption. About 28 percent said they had access to alternative office space. America's small business community needs to build on those numbers and find new ways to prepare for whatever might come our way.

There are several simple, low-cost steps that small business owners should take.

- Calculate how much money you might need in reserve if you had to shut down for a day, a week, a month, or longer.
- Develop, distribute, and maintain an emergency contact list that includes all your employees as well as local emergency responders and utility companies.
- Create a disaster communications plan, with a designated spokesperson who can keep customers informed about the status of business operations and plans for reopening.
- Contact your insurance company to find if you're covered for various kinds of disasters. Many small businesses choose to buy "business interruption insurance," which covers operating expenses like payroll and utility bills in the event of an unexpected shutdown.
- Brainstorm a list of tough questions ranging from "What's the biggest disaster risk in my neighborhood or my region?" to "How would I contact my staff if wireless service is down?"

For a small business, closing for just one day can often mean huge financial losses. Last year alone, the SBA approved more than 3,300 business disaster loans totaling \$372 million. We're proud to meet our mission of providing this assistance to business owners, *especially* when we know that they've followed a disaster preparedness plan that has positioned them to rebound, rebuild, and start contributing to their local economy once again.

To help small businesses with their preparedness planning, SBA has teamed up with Agility Recovery Solutions to create an online continuity planning workshop called "Prepare My Business" (www.preparemybusiness.org). Small business owners can access helpful tools, such as this month's webinar which is titled, "10 Steps to Business Preparedness." Other helpful sites include www.sba.gov/disasterassistance or www.ready.gov.

As small businesses are leading America's economic recovery, many of them are investing time and money into their plans to grow and create jobs. Developing a strong disaster preparedness plan should be a critical and integral piece of those efforts.