



Don't let a disaster defeat your nonprofit

Most not-for-profits are intensely focused on present needs, not the possibility that disaster will strike sometime in the distant future. But because a fire, flood or other natural or manmade disaster could strike at any time, the time to plan for it is now.

You likely already have many of the necessary processes in place — such as evacuating your office. A disaster or continuity plan simply organizes and documents your processes.

Identify specific risks

No organization can anticipate or eliminate all possible risks, but you can limit the damage of potential risks specific to your nonprofit. The first step in creating a disaster plan is to identify the specific threats you face when it comes to your people, processes and technology. For example, if you work with vulnerable populations such as children and the disabled, you may need to take extra precautions to protect your clients.

Also assess what the damages would be if your operations were interrupted. For example, if you had an office fire — or even a long-lasting power outage — what would be the possible outcomes regarding property damage and financial losses?

Make your plan

Designate a lead person to oversee the creation and implementation of your continuity plan. Then assemble teams to handle different duties. For example, a communications team could be responsible for contacting and updating staff, volunteers and other stakeholders, and updating your website and social media accounts. Other teams might focus on:

- Safety and evacuation procedures,

- IT issues, including backing up data offsite,
- Insurance and financial needs, and
- Recovery — getting your office and services back up and running.

Planning pays off

All organizations — nonprofit and for-profit alike — need to think about potential disasters. But plans are critical for some nonprofits. If you provide basic human services (such as medical care and food) or are a disaster-related charity, you must be ready to support victims and their families. This could mean mobilizing quickly, perhaps without full staffing, working computers or safe facilities. You don't want to be caught without a plan. Contact us for more information.

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