

Ready Rating™

Back Up Strategies for Key Personnel

Considerations for Key Management and Decision Makers

- Succession planning is critical in disaster situations. Identify, in advance, who will be responsible for important decisions and assign at least one back up. For example, who can approve and/or access funds for emergency services or supplies if the individual who normally makes those decisions is unavailable.
- Revisit existing plans and assumptions. Challenge the assignment of roles and responsibilities against new worst case scenarios and adjust plan as necessary.
- Conduct a regular review of your “Personnel Back Up” plans, annually or in the event of organizational changes.
- Do not restrict succession planning to your executive management level. You undoubtedly have personnel with unique or specialized training/experience on whom you rely heavily.

Considerations for Key Personnel

- Conduct an assessment of your essential processes and who is responsible for them. In an emergency situation, the department manager may not be the only key personnel. You may have personnel who operate specific equipment or that have received specialized training/certifications.
- Collaborate with managers and process owners to identify the right back up personnel for each of your essential processes and roles.
- Document essential processes and individual tasks thoroughly. Having clear documentation increases confidence and will ensure that back up (alternate) personnel do not overlook important tasks or decision points in a disaster situation.
- Introduce cross training, job sharing, or job rotation with personnel that may need to serve as back up.
- Where possible, pool your personnel and resources for interconnected processes, systems, or collaborative technologies. This builds capability and resilience into your day to day operations.
- Ensure you have more than one individual that can recover IT capabilities (e.g., email) and access stored data.



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Considerations for Training Back Up Personnel

- Validate that appropriate training is conducted by holding each party accountable (trainer/trainee).
- Assign cross training as a professional development activity and include it as part of your performance evaluations. This helps back up personnel understand how the business functions within networks, builds appreciation for roles and relationships, and supports retention by increasing opportunities and flexibility within your workforce.
- Provide alternate (back up) personnel with opportunities to practice the assigned tasks during normal operations. This builds experience, confidence, and trust before they have to step in during a disaster.
- Use staff vacation periods as an opportunity for cross-trained personnel to practice. Afterwards, evaluate the performance with both parties to address any gaps or areas for improvement. Be sure to document any areas that were overlooked or unclear so they can be used as reference in the event of a disaster.