*When formulating an emergency response plan, several issues should take precedence. First, what policies and procedures are needed to ensure the health and safety of personnel, visitors, and others who may be on-site when an incident occurs?*

*Second, are there regulatory considerations that need to be addressed in the emergency response plan that comes out of the planning committee?*

*Next, what resources are needed to implement the plan and are they the correct ones based on technical or training specifications?*

**Reflect the Character of the Organization**

Once the core requirements are established, the Emergency Response Planning Committee can begin to make decisions and craft policies that reflect the unique needs of the organization. To do this effectively, the full spectrum of interests should be represented. This requires that the various stakeholder groups be contacted, and their issues and priorities recorded.

This is also an opportunity to gather information on threats that individual groups are concerned about and establish operating parameters. For example, what, if any, is the implication of having the main website offline for an hour? This issue should be quantified and if possible, expressed in financial terms. Expressing implications monetarily will help with the budgeting process.

Key to the success of this committee is executive sponsorship. Therefore, having a member of the executive team fully engaged and present at the kick-off meeting should be a committee priority.

**Scope of Discussion**

The committee should meet periodically. Some organizations choose to gather quarterly or bi-annually but should meet a minimum of once a year. It will likely take a series of meetings to get an emergency response program underway. Committee meeting topics could include:

* Charter Statement – This statement should reflect the unique character and needs of the organization.
* Planning priorities.
* What policies and procedures are needed to ensure the health and safety of staff, visitors, and others who may be on-site when an incident occurs?
* Training needs for general personnel and the Emergency Response Team.
* Review all events or near misses.
* Review requests for any tools or other resources.
* What threats are known to face the organization – weather, environmental, etc.?
* What internal risks are present and what department needs to take priority?
* Are there regulatory considerations that need to be addressed in the emergency action plan?
* What resources are needed to implement the plan and are they the correct ones based on technical or training specifications and needs?
* What resources are available, e.g., fire and safety equipment? Do they meet the required standards and needs?
* Organizational leaders are encouraged to become aware and educate themselves on best practice compliance and realistic accommodations for accessibility.
* Budgeting needs.
* Revision of any existing plans.
* Roles and responsibilities for Emergency Action Plan teams.
* Existing or upcoming initiatives and their relationship to emergency response planning.

If any projects are ongoing, time should be given to reviewing progress made and reconfirming the goals of these initiatives.

**Changing Priorities**

Over time the Emergency Response Plan and associated policies should evolve. Only by having a wide representation of opinions and meeting regularly can this committee succeed in meeting its goals.