

KEEP YOUR BUSINESS IN BUSINESS

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YOUR FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

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FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

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www.wmarsontaskforce.gov.uk/kybib

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LEGAL

The information contained in this Handbook is for general guidance on matters of fire safety only. The application and impact of laws can vary widely based on the specific facts involved and you are advised to seek further specialist advice if you are at all uncertain as to their application in relation to your business. Given the changing nature of laws, rules and regulations, and the inherent hazards of electronic communication, there may be delays, omissions or inaccuracies in the information contained in this Handbook.

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CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND DISASTER RECOVERY

By fulfilling some or all of these categories your workplace will be a safe and a good place to work. It shows that you care about the safety and welfare of your staff. You need to have contingency plans in case a disaster strikes so that you can remain in business.

Remember.....

Approximately 3/4 of businesses do not recover from a serious fire.

Fire Plan

Produce an outline fire plan – what is important for the fire brigade to save first for your business's survival afterwards.

Disaster Recovery

If your premises were severely damaged by fire...

- › How would you cope?
- › Would you be in a position to continue trading?
- › Have you made a disaster recovery plan?

The following guidance is offered on a goodwill basis, with the intention of assisting your business back to normal operating conditions with minimal delay should your premises be affected by fire. The principles are also applicable for other potential disasters (i.e. flooding etc).

CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND DISASTER RECOVERY

FORMULATING A DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN

Formulating a Disaster Recovery Plan

A disaster recovery plan should be formulated to ensure that any impact on business continuity, following a fire or other emergency, is kept to an absolute minimum.

Although this information refers specifically to fire related incidents, the plan may also be adapted or developed for use in other emergency scenarios, such as: floods, acts of vandalism or terrorism, explosion and hardware/software failure.

Check with your insurance company what arrangements they already have in place in order to avoid duplication of work, or contravention of any requirement likely to be imposed by them in the event of any future claim (e.g. they may nominate certain companies to be used for specific tasks).

A responsible person (and at least one deputy) should be nominated as 'team leader' to take control over each of the following references in the event of your disaster recovery plan being initiated:

- ▶ Facilities
- ▶ Information Technology
- ▶ Recovery of valuable items
- ▶ Supplies
- ▶ Security
- ▶ Public Relations (including liaison with press/television)
- ▶ Data recovery
- ▶ Communications

(Some team leaders may assume responsibility for two or more references detailed on the above list).

Think carefully about possible nominations in respect of their availability during times when your premises are closed. Someone who lives twenty miles away or is usually unavailable at weekends may not be the ideal candidate!

The individuals allocated the above references will collectively form your 'Disaster Recovery Team'. To operate efficiently, you will need to identify an 'Operational Centre' from where the team will operate under the control of a 'director' in the event of an emergency situation. Bear in mind that your premises may be rendered unusable due to the effects of fire. Consequently, you may wish to discuss the possibility of reciprocal arrangements with a neighbouring business or arrange for temporary accommodation to be provided. At least two copies of your 'plan' should be produced, with one copy being kept off-site.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND DISASTER RECOVERY

FORMULATING A DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN • SECURITY

Before creating a 'Disaster Recovery Plan' an assessment of your premises should be undertaken, making a note of any inherent risks or potential problems likely to occur following an outbreak of fire.

Consider the following points when formulating your plan:

- ▶ Consult staff in all sections and departments, especially where their role is of a specialist nature,
- ▶ Identify which documents or files are considered to be 'critical' in relation to the 'survival' of your business,
- ▶ Produce a document salvage priority plan to ensure the most important records are recovered as a matter of urgency,
- ▶ Ensure all 'critical' paper documents are stored in a fire-proof box, cabinet or room and the location of such storage is recorded in the plan,
- ▶ Ensure vital electronic data is backed-up on disk or tape and stored off-site, once again noting the location of such storage in 'the plan',
- ▶ Check that sufficient insurance cover has been arranged, (including cover for consequential loss of trade),
- ▶ Try to allocate a definite time frame for the recovery of critical functions, rather than a general statement of intent,
- ▶ Identify key plant and equipment, making a note of its type, specification and reference numbers or codes, where appropriate,
- ▶ Identify methods of protection or replacement of critical equipment.

Security

A fire at your premises may have serious implications on security for the affected building and/or the site in general.

Doors and windows may have been rendered insecure by the effects of fire, or the firefighting actions of the Fire Service.

Consider the following points:

- ▶ Security Staff
- ▶ Do you employ your own security staff? If you do, are their numbers sufficient to provide 24 hour protection for your site, possibly over a number of days following a fire?
- ▶ Where can you obtain the services of additional security staff at short notice, if considered necessary?

CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND DISASTER RECOVERY

SECURITY • DEALING WITH THE PRESS / MEDIA

- ▶ In the absence of security staff, who will protect your property?
- ▶ Boarding Up - you may require the services of a 24 hour 'boarding-up' company. Check who is available, what services they provide and any other conditions which may apply, and enter the details in your disaster recovery plan.
- ▶ Burglar Alarm System - ensure your burglar alarm system is maintained in full working order.
- ▶ What happens if you need emergency repairs following a fire?
- ▶ Do your alarm engineers work 24 hours? Weekends?
- ▶ Ensure the alarm engineers contact number is entered in your disaster recovery plan.
- ▶ C.C.T.V. - if you have C.C.T.V., ensure the system is maintained in full working order and camera views remain unobstructed. Arrangements should be in place to ensure that, following a fire, any video tapes recovered are passed to a responsible person for safekeeping. Their availability should be made known to the senior Fire Officer present or the Police, either of whom may find the tape content useful in their subsequent investigations.

Dealing with the Press (Media)

If you have a fire of a serious nature, you will undoubtedly be approached by the 'press' and possibly television companies to provide a statement or give an interview. A responsible company representative should be nominated as 'press officer' and any enquiries from the media directed to this person. A deputy should also be appointed.

The local press will normally express an interest even in fires of a minor nature. Try to use this publicity to your advantage. For instance, if you are confident that you can continue in business at the moment, or will be able to operate a limited service until returning to normal working conditions, then say so! Remember, your customers will be keen to learn what impact your fire will have on their business. Do not give your competitors the advantage – you may wish to discuss such a situation with your legal representative before talking to the media.

Telephone Calls

In the event of your telephone system being disabled by fire, you should consider diverting calls to another telephone number, a mobile perhaps. Your customers may call for reassurance after hearing of a fire at your premises.

If your phone number is unobtainable after a day or two, your customers may assume you have ceased trading.

Postal System

If your premises, (or part of your premises) are rendered unusable by fire, you may need to make arrangements for redirection or collection of incoming mail.

Data Recovery

Check with your Insurers – are you covered for data retrieval. If you are, they will arrange for the service to be carried out promptly. If not, contact a data recovery specialist as a matter of urgency.

Electronic Data

In many cases where computer hard drives, or back-up disks/tapes are subjected to heat, smoke or water damage, most or all of the data can be recovered by specialists. To be successful, certain pre-conditions must be met. The conditions also apply where computers or back-up material have been exposed to smoke, even though there may be no obvious signs of contamination. Be aware that some machinery and plant are also governed by on board computers.

Where damage from smoke, heat or water, to computers or back-up material is obvious, or even suspected, ensure your staff:

- › **DO NOT** turn on the electrical power to any computer
- › **DO NOT** try to 'run' any hard drive, back-up disk or tape in an attempt at do-it-yourself data retrieval
- › **DO NOT** tamper with damaged computers, disks or tapes
- › **DO NOT** move damaged computers

Paper Data

Important or critical paper documents damaged by fire, smoke or water can often be recovered by specialists. Their assistance should be requested without delay as combustion products can be highly acidic and corrosive. As an emergency measure,

certain valuable items, such as books, (but not photographs), may be frozen in commercial freezers. This will arrest further damage until skilled assistance is obtained.

Check with your insurance company to establish whether or not you are covered for data retrieval. If you are, they will arrange for the service to be carried out promptly. If not, you will need to contact a data recovery specialist as a matter of urgency. You should enter an appropriate contact number in your disaster recovery plan.

Salvage and Storage

The weather protection to your premises may be adversely affected by a fire incident. Roofing, doors and windows may be breached, exposing finished goods, workstations, office accommodation, etc., to the elements. Such problems associated with minor fires can usually be quickly resolved. However, major fires present a greater challenge. It may be necessary in some circumstances to relocate your business to 'new' premises on a temporary or permanent basis.

Preparations for such action should include entering contact numbers in your disaster recovery plan for:

- ▶ Property Letting Agents
- ▶ Local Authority Estates Departments
- ▶ Companies who lease portable units

You should also consider:

- ▶ Establishing the locations of suitable premises, (and industrial estates), within a reasonable distance of your current site
- ▶ Establishing suitable positions for siting temporary, portable units (avoid areas which may make access or egress to and from your site difficult, or affect access to services such as drains, sewers, etc)
- ▶ Where will you store salvaged materials or stock?
- ▶ What action could be taken about incoming deliveries, (do they need to be cancelled or redirected)?
- ▶ Provision of canteen facilities
- ▶ Provision of toilet facilities
- ▶ Car parking

After the Fire Maintenance and Damage Limitation

The Fire Service may have to use large quantities of water to contain a fire at your premises. In these circumstances, you should arrange for roof guttering, downpipes and drains to be checked for blockages due to the 'washing away' of fire debris by firefighting jets. Be aware that environmental legislation may apply to your site following a fire, (see 'Advice from the Environment Agency'). If you use or store hazardous materials, what action may be necessary to prevent their entry into drains or river courses? Details of the amount and location of such materials should be made known to the Fire Service in the event of a fire at your premises.

The services detailed below may need to be checked by a competent person before being reinstated following a fire:

- ▶ Electric, Gas and Water supply
- ▶ Fire alarm system
- ▶ Burglar alarm system
- ▶ Emergency lighting system,
- ▶ Fixed firefighting installations, e.g. sprinklers, inert gas discharge systems, fire extinguishers, etc.
- ▶ Telephone system (including internet connection if appropriate),
- ▶ Air conditioning or ventilation systems
- ▶ Heating system

Contact details, including emergency telephone numbers if appropriate, should be recorded in your disaster recovery plan for each service.

Useful Contacts

Other useful contact numbers should be included in your 'plan', for example:

- ▶ Companies who specialise in smoke residue removal
- ▶ Salvage companies
- ▶ Transport and removal companies
- ▶ Plant hire contractors for pumps, generators, heating equipment, etc.
- ▶ Decontamination Specialists (if appropriate)
- ▶ Building contractors, architects, roofing contractors, structural engineers, etc.
- ▶ Local Authority engineering services
- ▶ Other National Authorities as appropriate, (e.g. Environment Agency if there is a possibility that rivers or water courses may be polluted as a result of an incident)

CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND DISASTER RECOVERY

USEFUL CONTACTS • TRAINING

- ▶ Legal representatives
- ▶ Insurers or brokers, as appropriate
- ▶ Internet service provider, (if you trade on the internet)
- ▶ Telephone numbers for customers, clients and suppliers
(You may wish to keep them informed of the situation, especially if you are in a position to continue trading)
- ▶ Local Press, (particularly if you have 'good' news to offer in respect of business continuity)

To be effective, your disaster recovery plan should be:

- ▶ Reviewed and updated regularly, every 6 or 12 months. Check that companies identified to provide assistance still continue to trade and their details remain unchanged, (particularly the telephone number)
- ▶ Simple to understand and implement. Consider creating 'prompt cards' for each nominated 'team leader'
- ▶ Invoked as soon as possible after the onset of an emergency
- ▶ Invoked as a training exercise at least once every two years. Any difficulties or problems encountered should be addressed and the 'plan' amended accordingly

Training is essential!

DUTY OF CARE: If you employ anyone to work....

You have a duty to provide a safe working environment for your employees and other persons who resort to your premises.

You must ensure your building is safe to use before re-occupation, following a fire at your premises. Accordingly, a suitable person should be nominated to consider the following:-

- ▶ Is the structure safe? (If unsure, contact a structural engineer or, if you consider the building to be in danger of collapse, contact your Local Authority Building Control Officer)
- ▶ Are the means of escape in case of fire adequate?
- ▶ Are the means for giving warning in case of fire adequate?
- ▶ Are the means for fighting fire adequate? (If in doubt, contact the Fire Service and ask to speak to a Fire Safety Officer)
- ▶ Are you complying with other relevant legislation, e.g. 'Health and Safety at Work?'

Advice from the Environment Agency

In relation to the impact of a fire incident on the environment

- ▶ Following an incident, measures should be in place to dispose of any spillage, contaminated material or firefighting water in a correct manner.
- ▶ Contaminated water should not be disposed of to drain without prior permission. A discharge of polluted water to surface drains carries a maximum penalty of £20,000.
- ▶ If off-site disposal of solid or liquid waste is required, a registered carrier of waste should be used and the movement of the waste will need to be documented. Failure to comply with the 'Duty of Care' carries a maximum fine of £5,000.

For flood preparation information, please refer to the 'Introduction to KYBIB'.

The Environment Agency can be contacted for advice on the following **freephone** number **0800 807060**.