

# Coronavirus Business Planning

March 2020

It is critical that businesses establish a plan immediately; we do not know when or how hard Nebraska will be hit with the Coronavirus. In Washington, for example, NO notice was given to businesses or people before they were forced to quarantine; many of the businesses remain closed until further notice with employees working from home. Having a business continuity plan in place will ensure your company continues to function at a high level even in the worst scenario; this does not need to be a crisis. Now is the time to establish a plan of action.

## **Continuity Planning**

Identify staff members who can accurately assess how your company functions, both internally and externally; identify employees, materials, procedures, and equipment that are essential to keep the business operating; and identify operations critical to survival and recovery. Include emergency payroll, expedited financial decision making, and accounting systems to track and document costs in the event of an unexpected business incident, and assign each task to a manager who will be responsible for that function for the duration of the event.

Establish procedures for succession of management including at least one person who is not at the company headquarters, if possible. Practice worst-case scenario planning. It is possible someone from your leadership team may be unavailable; plan for contingency if that person serves a critical role. Decide which employees will be involved in pulling together your emergency plan. Include co-workers from all levels in your organization and use them as active members of the emergency management team; don't overlook interns and new employees—they may recognize a vital function that could be overlooked. Consider a broad cross-section of employees but focus on employees with expertise vital to daily business functions.

## **Dealing With Clients & Service**

Compile a list of your key customers and establish a plan to serve them for the duration. Since it is impossible at this time to know long that will be, plan for at least four to six months and identify priorities for each.

## **Suppliers, Vendors, Contractors**

Identify key suppliers, vendors, contractors, banks, and any other businesses you must interact with on a daily basis. If any serve a critical role, consider developing a professional relationship with more than one company in case one of your main vendors is compromised and cannot service your needs. A disaster that shuts down a key supplier or vendor can be devastating to your business.

## **Quarantine & Premises**

If any of your employees are identified as having even casual contact with anyone known to have Coronavirus, your facility may be involuntarily shut down. Plan what you will do if your building, plant, or office is not accessible. Define crisis management procedures and individual responsibilities in advance. Talk with your staff or co-workers and frequently review and practice what you intend to do during and after an emergency.

## **Communications & Emergency Planning for Employees**

Your employees are your most valuable asset. Open lines of communication are essential before, during, and after any incident. Include emergency preparedness information and virus updates in newsletters, on your company intranet, in periodic employee emails, and in other internal communications tools. Consider setting up a password-protected page on the company website, an email alert, or a call-in voice recording to communicate with employees in an emergency. Designate an “800” number or conference line that can be used to communicate in the event of a quarantine with designated call times.

### **Crisis Communication Plan**

Detail how your organization plans to communicate with employees, local authorities (identify point of contact for emergency services and first responders), customers, and others for the duration of the event. Give employees information on how you will communicate when and how to report to work following an emergency. Make sure senior management has all relevant information and who will communicate updates to the public. Inform clients/customers if you anticipate delays in service (and communicate clearly how and when products will be received or services rendered). If you are able to provide assistance to the community, communicate with officials what your company is prepared to do to help in the recovery effort. Also communicate with local, state, and federal authorities what emergency assistance is needed for you to continue essential business activity.

### **Meetings & Conferences**

At this time, there is no reason to cancel meetings and conferences, but management teams should stay vigilant with updates; as we have seen, circumstances change quickly.

### **Travel – National & International**

There are several countries where travel is now prohibited; many airlines have ceased all flights in and out of certain areas. Call before you go.

#### **Travel Within the U.S.**

Management should use common sense for employees planning any travel and verify meetings/conferences or events have not been canceled prior to leaving. A good resource for updates is at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>.

#### **International Travel**

Use this link as a guide (and check with your airline): Department of State Travel Advisory Levels chart and color-coded map - <https://travelmaps.state.gov/TSGMap/>

**IF YOU OR YOUR EMPLOYEES MUST TRAVEL, PURCHASE TRIP INSURANCE.**

### **Facilities, Buildings, Property & Insurance**

This is a good time to review your business insurance coverage and understand your deductibles, if applicable. Consider how you will pay creditors and employees. If you are the business owner or principal, you should also plan how you will provide for your own income. Finally, find out what records your insurance provider will want to see after an incident and store them in a safe place.

Determine who will be in charge of the premises in the event you need to close suddenly. Consider the ways in which people, products, supplies, and other things get into and leave your building or facility; make sure all entrances and exits are secure. Identify what machinery, computers, custom parts, or other essential equipment is needed to keep the business up and running—and what (if anything) needs to be moved in the event the building will be closed.

### **Business Recovery**

The Trump Administration is reviewing actions to aid businesses in recovery to mitigate the impact and financial losses. The U.S. Small Business Administration is a great resource for businesses seeking assistance after an incident.

**NOTE:** Cyber criminals usually kick into high gear during a crisis, emergency, or other event. Remind employees to stay vigilant and delete any unsolicited “COVID-19” updates they receive—and never open any attachments from an unknown source.

### **Employee Tips**

- Fill Rx immediately in the event the situation gets worse in our area. Look into converting all Rx to mail-order for any prescriptions you need on a monthly basis. Contact your doctor or pharmacist for more information; insurance carriers typically offer discounts.
- Have automatic deposit set up for payroll and set up online payments for bills and utilities.
- Know what to do if your business is closed for an extended period and how to obtain information.
- Have a plan for childcare if your child’s school, nursery, or daycare should need to temporarily shut down.
- Stay calm. Most people who become infected experience only mild illness and recover, but it can be more severe for others with underlying medical issues. This is a very small percentage; most will make a full recovery.

### **Common Sense Precautions**

- Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.
- Whenever possible, maintain at least three feet between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- If you have fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early. Call your doctor at the first sign you are not getting better or have any fever.
- Walk-in visits are limited at all area hospitals. Call ahead.
- Stay home if you are sick!

### **Sources:**

FEMA: [https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1389022685845-7cdf7d7dad7638a19477d01fdbfa820f/Business\\_booklet\\_12pg\\_2014.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1389022685845-7cdf7d7dad7638a19477d01fdbfa820f/Business_booklet_12pg_2014.pdf)

State Dept Maps: <https://travelmaps.state.gov/TSGMap>

Ready.gov: <https://www.ready.gov/business-continuity-plan>

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Rhode Island Society of CPAs & Rhode Island Business Forum: <https://www.riscpa.org>