

Every organization faces a crisis at one time or another. It may be due to weather events, violence in the workplace, or in our latest business concern, a pandemic. All require a well-crafted Preparedness Plan. While some businesses are required by regulations to have a plan in place, others do not have the same requirement. But one of the best business practices for every organization is planning for the unexpected.

If your business has a plan already in place, it's a great time to review it in light of our new environment. How has it worked in addressing the current COVID 19 business interruption? Where should changes be made to make it better/stronger/more effective now and for future issues? And what is missing from your plan that you could not have anticipated? In the flurry of urgency, if you aren't documenting what you are learning, you may forget some important lessons. And these lessons could be vitally important in the future.

If you do not have a Crisis Preparedness Plan (CPP), it is an excellent time to start the process. As already noted, documenting issues that have arisen due to today's pandemic can be the core of your plan. Below are some basics for a CPP to get you started.

- **Identify the Four Major Categories of Crises in the Workplace**

- **Safety** (Facilities) – sabotage, fire or faulty equipment and Workers' Compensation issues

- **Safety** (External) – weather, man-made and pandemic illness

- **Reputational** – need corporate response plan

- **Employees**

- Personal issues (family issues/crises)

- Employee illness or death (both anticipated and unexpected)

- Sudden departure of key employee(s)

- Identify core elements of each

- Determine responsible parties (Team Leads) for each element

- Create response teams for each element reporting to Team Leads

- Garner support from vendors for various response functions and include contacts with phone numbers for immediate assistance when needed

- Safety (facilities and external): insurance carriers

- Reputational: PR firms or other vendors

- Communications and Data: if not in place already, consider outsourcing your internal server(s) to an outside vendor/cloud service to insure business continuity and redundancy

- Employees: insurance carriers AND EAP vendors, local clergy and local mental health counselors

- Include safety drills – i.e. fire drills, tornado drills, active shooter drills, etc. and create a pre-determined drill schedule to practice and then determine strengths and weaknesses in those responses. Be sure to maintain an employee log of all PRESENT employees that can be accessed at any time before/during/after crisis (Cloud access)
- Review Crises' Teams plans at least one a year. And more frequent if there are warning signs of impending issues – or media focus on new issues (i.e. #metoo and COVID-19)
- Rotate members of the teams as needed
- Budget for improvements to these plans – as well as a contingency budget for emergency responses
- Include liability insurance carriers in plans to maximize possible savings because of the management plans in place.

It is NEVER too late to plan ahead. If you are just reviewing your current CPP or starting from scratch, today's learned lessons can be the difference in successfully dealing with future crises. Today is a good day to look forward and learn from what experience is teaching us.

For more information on developing Crisis Preparedness Plans, you should review the guidelines issued by the Center of Disease Control (CDC) at <https://emergency.cdc.gov/> or the Occupational Health and Safety Administration's (OSHA) Guidance of Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19 <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>.