



Lessons Learned

Chad & Joe's Top 15 Tips for Disaster Recovery



Chad Armentrout



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Chad Armentrout and Joe Balzer lead Viox Services' command centers and are at the forefront of virtually every US disaster. They have led recovery efforts for nearly every major disaster over the past 15 years. Together they provide leadership for our crews and provide our clients with solutions to prepare for disasters, and to help them recover their vital facility infrastructure and get them up and running as quickly as possible.

These are their proven tips they have accumulated through their experiences.

1 Invest in Planning—Business Continuity First. Disaster Recovery Second.

Invest in planning, processes, and procedures, and remember: your business continuity strategy drives the entire business and how disaster recovery operations are implemented.

2 Caring for Your Employees is Your Number One Priority.

Allow your employees to take care of their families first. The sooner employees and their families are taken care of the quicker you will become operational again.

3 Make Sure You Have Cold Hard Cash.

There will be a shortage of currency, and without power, cash registers and credit card machines won't be working. Have cash available at the scene.

4 Don't Rely on Local Resources.

They will either not be operational or spread too thin to respond to your needs.

5 Communicate and Empower.

In an emergency situation allow employees to be empowered to take positive action. The chain of command may not be available.

6 Select Strategic Vendors.

Select vendors that are geographically dispersed and have remote locations from which to operate. Ensure that they have well written Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) and Disaster Recovery Plans (DRPs).

7 Backup Storage for Critical Information.

If critical information is at the location affected and you don't perform regular backups at rigidly enforced intervals you are at great risk. Make sure that you store critical information at multiple locations.



- 8 Have Alternate Work Sites Ready.**
Set up alternate work sites in advance and don't rely on employees' homes as work locations.
- 9 Revisit & Update Plans Often!**
Outdated plans and facility maps that don't match infrastructure can be dangerous, prevent uptime and are costly. Update your plans as often as possible and focus on communicating expectations regarding recovery time objectives (RTOs) and service level agreements (SLAs) annually, especially before a predicted storm. Make sure all key personnel and vendors have copies of the BCP and DRP.
- 10 Plan and Train and Plan and Train Some More!**
Test for every possible scenario. Cross train your employees to handle multiple scenarios. Keep SOP's and your pool of resources up to date. Conduct fire drills, procedures for basic power failures, and go through the processes to prepare for every possible catastrophic event.
- 11 Plan for Extended Outages and Have Plenty of Back up Materials and Resources.**
Make sure you plan for longer than 24 hours of downtime—you could be down longer. Have a pool of resources with the right skill sets and back up materials on hand such as fuel, equipment and facility materials for prevention and recovery.
- 12 Forget Technology and Going Paperless.**
Ensure that hard copies of SOP's, equipment manuals, important passwords, security information, local authorities' contact information, and general employee contact information is available in hard-copy form and placed in a secure location. Have satellite phones and command centers to assist with crew navigation and communications.
- 13 Prepare for Re-Entry.**
For high security locations, make sure you have up-to-date identification and communication protocols in place that allows contractors to enter the buildings.
- 14 Before You Deploy - Assess.**
Before you completely mobilize your crews - assess the situation. Figure out which critical operations are damaged, prioritize accordingly, and then mobilize the teams to get them up and running quickly.
- 15 Check Your Smartphone - There's An APP for everything!**
Many companies and agencies are producing apps to raise awareness and help you plan – check your smartphone prior to any possible disaster, and you will find that organizations such as the American Red Cross, NOAA, FEMA and NIH have applications covering flood recovery, first aid information, safety tips and much more. If the technology stays operational, these apps can be great resources.

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