

Disaster Preparedness and Recovery



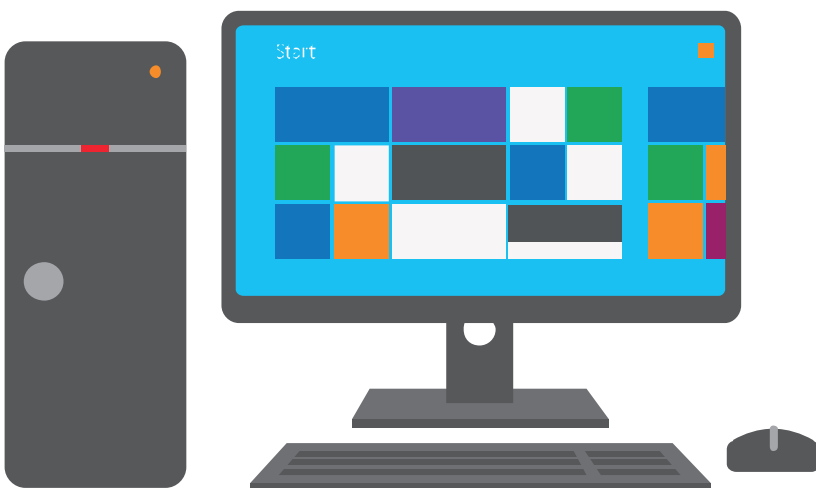
Do you have a preparation plan?

You probably didn't hesitate to develop a business plan when starting your company to ensure for the growth of your business. Similarly, preparing your business for possible disaster demands not just an awareness of the potential threats and measures for protection, but an actual plan that dictates how your business will respond to disaster.

When developing a preparation plan, first determine the potential disasters that could affect your business, keeping in mind that, while some disasters are physical (i.e. floods, fires, etc.), others can be virtual (i.e. network shutdowns, cybercrime, etc.).

You also might want to think through how a physical disaster could impact your market. Some SMBs may find that they need greater agility in terms of products and services provided. For instance, if your business provides lawn service but doesn't assist in tree removal, perhaps it's wise to consider expanding your offerings to meet market demands for storm recovery. Consider if you run a small hardware store but don't sell generators, you might be missing out on a major business opportunity should widespread power outages occur in your region. Or if you have employees who would be unable to reach the office during floods, consider how productivity would continue if they are outfitted with mobile working capabilities. Additionally, you should ask yourself if your business' current technology infrastructure can handle potential market fluctuations.

To assist you in the development of your plan following are some tips and guidance pertaining to two different, but equally important, areas of consideration related to disaster preparedness and disaster recovery – your technology and your business itself. It's important to realise that in many cases, having the right measures in place can help your business avoid disaster in the first place, while other tactics will aid you in getting your business up and running again if disaster strikes.



Technology Strategies

Cloud-based software and more

Explore cloud-based software solutions designed for SMBs. Cloud-based software enables you to store information in a secure offsite location and access it anywhere you have an internet connection. Cost-effective for SMBs, cloud-based software often comes with enterprise-class capabilities, making it a wise investment regardless of whether or not your business encounters disaster.

Hard drive replications

If you can't or don't wish to invest in an online backup solution, regularly replicate your hard drive (ideally on a weekly basis), using a detached disk drive. However, keep in mind that in order to make this method fail proof, you'll need to remove the disk drive from the premises each night, in the event that a physical disaster occurs and you aren't able to retrieve it in time.

Online Backup options

If you don't store all of your data in the cloud, consider investing in an online backup solution that will safeguard all important data stored on your hard drive and make it easily accessible in the event of disaster. Also, if you and your workers store critical data on mobile devices, make sure that data is also protected by your online backup solution.

Encryption matters

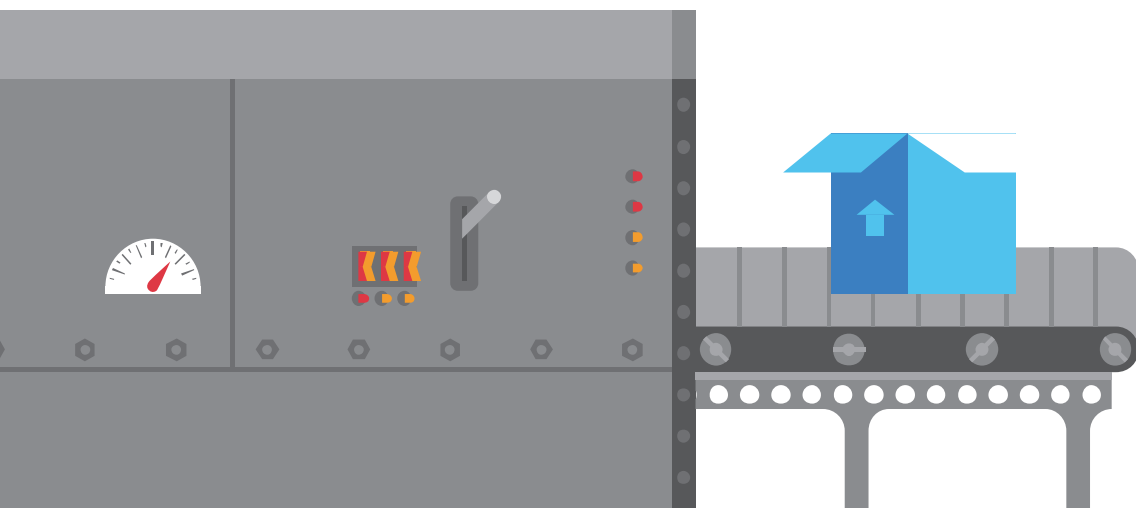
If your operation system enables you to encrypt files and folders, by all means take advantage of this feature. Encryption makes data indecipherable to unauthorised users and can help prevent virtual disasters should corporate laptops and other computing devices get lost or stolen.

Keep your technology updated

Maintaining updated technology might prevent a virtual disaster from ever happening in the first place, since updates usually provide security patches and new protective features. Install updates whenever prompted to do so; or, adjust your PC settings to install updates automatically.

Map your environment

Be sure you or someone within your company has an understanding of all the important systems in your network environment. If you don't have a network, still take the time to identify all of your critical systems. Determine how long, if at all, those systems can be down during a rebuild in order to ensure you can still operate and maintain customers.



Business Strategies

Pull out your policies

Though reading through all the fine print can be overwhelming it is important that you thoroughly understand your insurance plans and policies. What physical disasters are covered? What forms and filings need to be completed after a disaster strikes?

Communicating with employees

If you are a small business with a few dedicated employees, they will be looking to you for direct guidance and encouragement during a disaster. They also need to know ahead of time what to do in the event of an emergency. For SMBs that do not have HR resources, internal communications around disasters should come from the business owners, as well as any guidance you wish to communicate in advance of any potential disasters.

Communicating with external audiences

In addition to providing employees with guidance, you will also need to communicate with your external audiences, who likely will be expecting to hear from you. Make a list of all potential audiences that could be impacted by a disaster to have on-hand when the time comes to communicate. For instance, do you have suppliers or vendors who may be planning deliveries? What about people expecting payments or deliveries/services from your business? What do customers and clients need to know about how the disaster impacted your business? If a data breach of sensitive customer information occurred, planning an alert ahead for time can prevent customers from hearing about it through third parties and not directly from you.

Communication methods

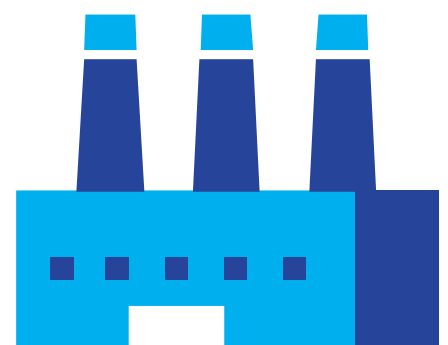
Determine the method of internal and external communications. Will you individually notify people via e-mail, phone or the mail? Or will you post information on your website, social network site or corporate blog?

Money management

Even during a disaster, businesses need to pay their bills, make payroll and pay suppliers. Be sure you know what all of these accounts are and have contact info for all of these parties, in addition to ensuring your financial management system is backed up properly

Make contact with your local government

All of the State Governments have developed disaster plans to assist individuals and businesses during times of crisis. There are often structured programs for recovery, donations and also relief funding. Investigate your local government's policy on disaster planning to ensure that you are aware of what is available in a time of need. Find the link for your local government's Emergency and Disaster Assistance page here: <http://www.australia.gov.au/content/disaster-assistance>



Technology tools useful for disaster preparedness and recovery

Having the right technology in place can help prepare your business to avoid disaster and/or recover more swiftly from any catastrophes that might occur. The following is a list of technology tools to consider implementing, keeping in mind that many of these tools have significant business benefits that extend even beyond the area of disaster preparedness and recovery:

Free PC Scan from Microsoft

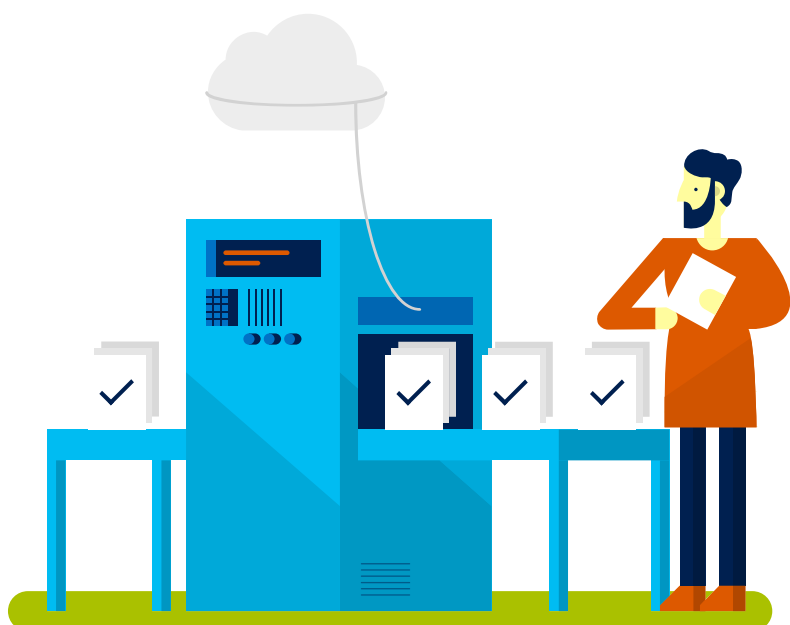
The Microsoft Safety Scanner is a free, downloadable security tool that provides on-demand scanning and helps remove viruses, spyware, and other malicious software from your PCs. It works with your existing antivirus software.

Why is this important?

Your computers could be at risk and you may not even realise it. Many computer users unwittingly download or open files or emails that contain harmful viruses or spyware.

Office 365

Microsoft Office 365 for Businesses is a cloud-based subscription service that lets users access email, important documents, contacts and calendars from virtually anywhere on almost any device. In fact, Office 365 makes remote working at any time easy and efficient. With Office 365, remote employees can collaborate and edit documents from different locations, in real time, with insight into exactly who is editing and viewing your documents. Workers also can conduct audio and video conferences with the click of a button, can share their calendars with team members to make scheduling easy, and can know whether colleagues are busy, away or available to chat simply by viewing an indicator next to their names.



Microsoft Azure

Microsoft Azure is Microsoft's application platform for the public cloud. Azure provides scalable, durable cloud storage, backup, and recovery solutions for any data, big and small. It works with the infrastructure you already have to cost-effectively enhance your business continuity strategy.

Azure is an open and flexible cloud platform that enables you to quickly build, deploy and manage applications across a global network of Microsoft-managed datacentres. You can build applications using any language, tool or framework. And you can integrate your public cloud applications with your existing IT environment.

Azure delivers a 99.95% compute SLA and enables you to run solutions on the same cloud that powers Skype, Office 365, Bing, and Xbox. It provides built-in software patching, network load balancing and high-availability features. Plus 24x7 technical support with engineers constantly monitoring service health. You can use this platform in many different ways:

- Create virtual machines for development and test or run SharePoint, SQL Server and other applications
- Take advantage of encrypted backups to Azure
- Build a web application that runs and stores its data in Azure datacentres
- Store data, with the applications that use this data running on-premises (that is outside the public cloud)
- Build massively scalable applications with lots of users

Why is this important?

Microsoft Azure is important to ensure businesses continue business operations in an event of disasters, moves, bankruptcies, loss of key personnel and other unexpected events. Azure keeps three synchronised copies of your data in three different locations, which many other backup solutions don't offer. This means you can be even more assured that your data is backed-up should you lose it.

Infrastructure costs are another key consideration. Azure allows you to cut hardware and infrastructure costs and reduce IT administration costs.

You also get unlimited servers and unlimited storage and the ability to scale your applications to any size without trouble. As a fully automated self-service platform that allows you to provision resources within minutes, you can grow or shrink your usage based on your needs. You only pay for the resources your application uses.



Windows Server 2012R2

Having a virtual machine or virtualising your computer is a key component to disaster preparedness. It means you can quickly recover if your on-premises servers are struck by a physical disaster. Windows Server 2012R2 makes desktop virtualisation more accessible and affordable for small businesses. Traditionally, only large companies could afford a virtualisation solution, but now small businesses have access to the same disaster preparedness capabilities through Windows Server 2012.

By consolidating physical servers onto virtual machines, you can be up and running within moments of a disaster occurring. Windows Server 2012 offers Remote Web Access, which provides a streamlined, touch friendly browser experience to access applications and data from virtually anywhere. And you can now connect to, search across, and access files and folders on your server through a Windows Phone app. The Windows Server 2012 edition also contains Hyper-V Replica, which provides a complete copy of your data between your on-premises and off-premise server, using a standard broadband data line. Hyper-V Replica continually makes copies of changes to your data every 30 seconds, so if a failure disables the primary server onsite, your organisation never loses more than five minutes of data.

Storms and fires aren't the only disasters you need to prepare for. If one of your employees happens to misplace their laptop, Windows Server 2012 Essentials gives your business a line of defence to protect business information on the machine. If you have 25 employees or less, you can back up all your computers and servers in the office and in the cloud. And with Storage Spaces also available on this version, it's faster, easier and more affordable than ever to increase your data backup capabilities if you need to.

Why is this important?

The threat of losing important business data can be daunting and knowing how to protect that data may be unclear. Imagine a worst-case scenario, which could be anything ranging from a fire to a flood. Your business could lose critical data. With virtualisation, you're able to replace traditional workstations with low-cost virtual desktops, personalised PC profiles and applications that employees can access over a local area network or the Internet from a variety of devices. Windows Server 2012 offers customers of all sizes enterprise-level capabilities to keep them running, as well as help them make the most of their IT budgets and identify ways to scale to meet fluctuating needs at an affordable price. With Windows Server 2012, small businesses can continue work uninterrupted even during a disaster. So you can rest assured that that your data is safe and uncompromised.



Windows 8.1

Microsoft's newest operating system, Windows 8.1 Professional was designed with small businesses in mind. It delivers new levels of mobility, productivity and security, without sacrificing performance or choice. The features that promote greater productivity, mobility and security in Windows 8.1 will also help to defend your business against potential virtual or physical disasters.

Safer at start-up with Trusted Boot

The new Windows protects devices and data by helping prevent viruses and malware at start-up. Using Trusted Boot, anti-malware software always loads before any third-party drivers or applications.

Safer browsing with Windows Defender

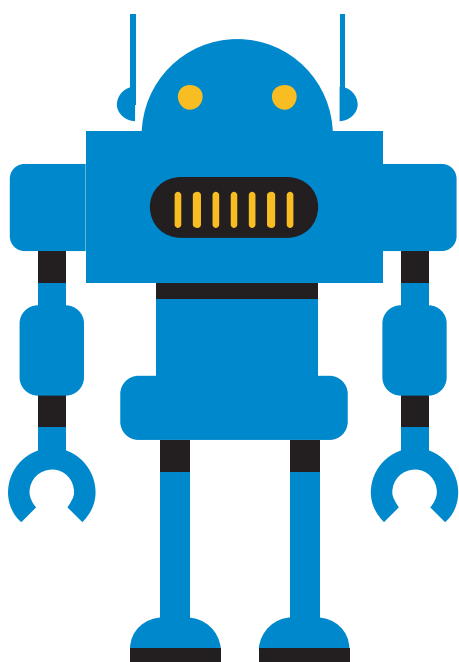
Microsoft's antivirus solution in Windows 8.1 Pro helps detect and stop the execution of known and unknown malware. Using Windows Defender, Internet Explorer 11 scans while you browse to help prevent bad things before they happen.

Backup your data with OneDrive

New enhancements in the cloud keep your files, Start screen layout, apps and settings stored on OneDrive. So if you lose your PC, you don't lose what matters most.

Remote business data removal

Maintain more control of your business content and data, no matter whether it's on a business or employee personal device. Remote business data removal allows you to erase critical content from devices that are lost or stolen or when an employee leaves your company. (This feature requires System Center which is sold separately.)



Protection for mobile workers

Windows 8 Professional includes built-in mobile broadband support for 3G and 4G telecommunication, enabling businesses on the go to connect to the internet immediately and also identify Wi-Fi hotspots when available. With increased mobility comes additional security considerations. BitLocker, a Windows 8 feature, can help protect your business from security disasters. It acts by safeguarding business data on PCs with faster hard drive encryption, so data stays safe without sacrificing worker productivity. Windows 8 Pro also includes BitLocker To Go, which takes the same technology and applies it to USB sticks and external drives so that file information there can be completely locked down and become virtually impossible for hackers to compromise. This is important for any of your remote employees who may be conducting business on the road, at a local coffee shop or on a plane, who could be at risk for data theft.

Why is this important?

An operating system that supports remote working productivity and security becomes immensely valuable in times of disaster. Productivity is a major factor in keeping businesses going after a disaster affects your business. The Remote Desktop feature allows users to connect to their desktop back at work and have full access to their files, so it's as if they are sitting at work in front of their computer.

Windows Phone

With software and services uniquely designed for SMBs users, Windows Phone makes it easier than ever to remain productive, keep in touch and protect your information while on the move. If a disaster prevents you or your employees from returning to a physical office location, having a Windows Phone allows you to work no matter where you are.

Why is this important?

Windows Phone can help keep your employees productive, even if your office is inaccessible, and can safeguard your business information. Windows Phone offers familiar Office Mobile apps like Outlook and Lync already built-in. It also runs Microsoft Office Hub, which provides access to Office applications like Word and syncs documents, files, videos and photos to SkyDrive for secure backup. Furthermore, SharePoint, Office 365, Exchange and other favourites are accessible, giving you and your employees the tools needed to accomplish everyday tasks from any location. And Windows Phone offers robust security features to protect your business information, guard against malware and even lock, wipe or locate your phone if it's lost or stolen from a remote location.

