

DO WE REALLY NEED A DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN? AFTER ALL, WE HAVE INSURANCE!

Statistics show that only about 19% of all businesses have any disaster response plan. Most businesses ultimately fail if they don't have a disaster response plan of any type or scope. This is a very scary statistic considering the number, type, and magnitude of disasters in the last three years. From the Great Chicago Flood and Hurricane Andrew in 1992, to the World Trade Center Bombing and Mississippi and Missouri River Valley Floods of 1993, to the LA Earthquake and severe flooding in Georgia and Texas in 1994, natural disasters threaten businesses, livelihoods, and homes. These disasters are doubly difficult to deal with as they cripple the infrastructure of cities and counties and make recovery more complicated. If natural disasters are not enough to encourage the contemplation and creation of disaster response plans, consider the impact of computer loss and telecommunications outages. It costs between \$10,000 to \$100,000 per mainframe, PC or LANs crash and eats up

one week/user.¹ For every hour of lost data, it takes one day to reconstruct and re-enter data. For every day of lost data, it takes one week to recover it. All this needs to be done in addition to the daily workload and responsibilities.

Not planning for a disaster can mean the loss of the entire collection, even the library as an entity within the corporation. If there are unique materials within, then the loss is greater. Not planning means that the staff must deal with the disaster on the spur of the moment, often creating conflicts in authority and personality. Not planning means that too many people will be doing the "glamorous" jobs instead of pitching in on the hard work of getting the place cleaned up and running again. Not planning can mean that there is no money to replace what is lost or damaged. Insurance may be inadequate, values out of date or non-existent; new departments and equipment not covered or even mentioned. Worst of all, poor administrative and management decisions might be made in the midst of a crisis because the idea seems good or the argument is persuasive; but in the long run these decisions do not serve the needs of the library.

Preparation for disasters and discussion about what to do when the ceiling comes down or the water rises can alleviate these problems. At the least, you will have thought about crises ahead of time and considered what you want to do. Training in the use of equipment and computers in a remote location can make resuming services seamless. Training will teach staff what to do to remove the water and rescue the collection from additional damage. Most of all, preparedness allows you to make appropriate decisions about what to do, how much to spend, and where to allocate staff, time, and money.