

Disaster Planning: Protecting Business Records



Natural and man-made disasters that damage or destroy business records can cripple an organization or put it out of business altogether. Disaster planning helps to minimize the risk of losing the valuable information stored in your filing system. By having a plan in place, steps can be taken to decrease the likelihood of a disaster, and can minimize the impact on your business should one occur.

Preventing A Filing Disaster

While there is little we can do to stop a major disaster like a flood or earthquake, there are many potential filing disasters that are preventable. Planning and routine maintenance can lower the risk of:

- Fire
- Water damage
- Mold or mildew
- Vermin or insect infestation
- Theft
- Vandalism
- Accidental destruction

The location of the filing area within a building and regular attention to structural issues such as drainage, fire extinguishing systems, alarms, environmental stability and pest control can prevent many disasters from occurring.

Preparing For The Worst

When a disaster strikes, it's important to have employees who have been trained to follow predetermined procedures to ensure their safety and to minimize the impact of the disaster on your records. Specific duties should be assigned to individuals ahead of time so they understand their roles and take appropriate action when the need arises. Responsibilities include:

- Disaster management and coordination



- Health and safety concerns
- Building and environmental control
- Recovery materials and equipment
- Security
- Insurance coordination, recording of damage
- General recovery assistance

Disaster prevention and recovery plans must be documented in detail to provide clear direction and minimize confusion during and after a disaster. The plan should define a disaster recovery team and their duties. Recovery and salvage tasks should be spelled out in detail to make sure loss of critical information is prevented.

Communication is important to a successful recovery. Clear lines of communication keep everyone informed of progress, and reaching established milestones helps maintain morale. A public relations coordinator should be part of the team to address media coverage of the event.

Getting Back To Normal

After salvage procedures have been completed, a final report on destroyed records should be made. Structural repair and restocking of disaster supplies must be completed, as well as insurance claims finalized. Review and revise the disaster plan based on new insights gained from the experience. And finally, celebrate the completion of the recovery with all team members.

