

# REAL ESTATE WEEKLY

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## Your company's emergency plan may be a disaster

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If companies across our country took the time to thoroughly evaluate their infrastructure and existing disaster plans, most would realize that they are unprepared for a major disruption to their business, security and communications systems. In fact, most firms would realize their current contingency plans are grossly inadequate and, in some cases, non-existent. For a short period of time following the events of September 11,



2001, security, back up and preparedness procedures became a priority. But as time has passed, people have been lulled into a sense of security and normalcy and therefore have become less vigilant about these matters. As a country we have come to rely on our city, state and federal governments to protect us and insure that in cases of emergencies, natural disasters or a terrorist attack, they will quickly and effectively provide for the continuation of power, telecommunications, transportation and necessary services like water.

Unfortunately, as we have seen before, that is not always the case. During major disasters businesses have been without power and telecommunications for hours, days and, in some cases, weeks. Yet, it would not be a surprise to find that many firms do not have

preparedness plans. Some may not have a plan in place to forward phone calls to an analog line in case of an emergency, and many would not have the proper contacts for their various service providers or their account information at the ready in the event of an emergency.

Having provided security services to a broad spectrum of businesses and corporations for nearly 25 years, Cambridge Security Services takes these issues very seriously. Cambridge created a committee headed by regional vice president Ralph Martell - comprised high-level managers and executives - to establish its own disaster plan and set up infrastructure that insured our company's security and business continuity in case of a natural disaster, major power outage and/or a terrorist attack. The model we have implemented represents a set of procedures and precautions we recommend to our clients or any business seeking a sense of security and readiness in our uncertain times.

First, we evaluated our business model and prioritized our short and long term needs for personnel, facilities, telecommunications, and transportation needs in case of an emergency. We reviewed our operating capital and expenditures, and then established a yearly budget for our company's emergency and back-up infrastructure. While these may seem like obvious steps, evaluating your needs and setting aside a budget on yearly basis to adjust for changing needs is a crucial step in having a functional disaster response and recovery plan.

In the event that a disaster did occur that affected our corporate headquarters in New York City, Cambridge built a back-up Operations Command Center in our New Jersey office that can support all four of our divisions indefinitely.

We created a system for emergency call forwarding for each of our divisions.

We designed and installed a series of back-up copper phone lines that would allow us to automatically switch from digital telecommunications to analog in a

disaster situation. We also distributed small laminated cards listing all required contact numbers, information and account passwords for our service providers to our key personnel.

Our firm designed and implemented a power back-up supply system for all of our telecommunications services. This allows us to run at full capacity for 38 hours during a major power outage. This would give our company the necessary time to gather our staff and get ourselves operational in an alternate location if power were not restored within 12 to 18 hours.

Our a digital network allows our executives to function from virtually anywhere at any time, but we also invested in a back-up internet line and software - using a different carrier - that automatically switches our connection to the back-up service in case of an interruption in our main provider's service.

*"... as time has passed, people have been lulled into a sense of security and normalcy and therefore have become less vigilant about these matters."*

Finally, we established a plan to provide transportation for our employees to and from our offices and client sites. This step is also integral to a successful response and recovery program. Every business relies on technology but it is the people who are the real lifeblood of any company. Making sure employees can get to work is one of

the most important aspects of business continuity.

These measures are fairly straightforward but they require planning and the commitment of financial resources - which can often be in short supply.

While we all hope that we will never need to implement our disaster recovery plans, having one in place is absolutely necessary in today's world. ■