



# How to Test Your Company's Disaster Preparedness

Your company may have a business continuity and disaster recovery (BCDR) plan on file. But are you ready to put it into action?

## Untested plans mean unpleasant surprises

If you work at a large company with complex IT, you probably already have a business continuity and disaster recovery (BCDR) plan. **A BCDR plan describes how a company will maintain operations in the event of a natural disaster**, pandemic outbreak, cyberattack or other emergency, as well as how it will recover afterward. Most plans cover topics like:

- How employees will continue to work during an emergency
- How data and IT systems will be backed up and restored
- How vital supply chains will continue without interruption

However, your plan is not worth the paper it's printed on if you don't test it. Companies that encounter the most surprises during a disaster are the ones that don't test their BCDR plans or perform tests that are as close to reality as possible. **And surprises during a disaster can have negative consequences, especially for revenue.**

## Ask yourself two important questions



### ARE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION PLANS IN PLACE?

Communication is key to surviving any disaster. Managers must be in close contact with their employees, especially during a catastrophic event, so any contact lists, call trees or general employee contact information should be up to date at all times because you never know when a disaster may strike.



### ARE YOUR VENDORS PREPARED FOR THE WORST?

When testing your company's BCDR plan, make sure your vendors are prepared, too. Ask each of your vendors if they have a BCDR plan and what the results were from their last exercise. Ask to see their exercise summary document to understand the scope and results of their most recent test.



# 50%

of companies have declared a disaster and shifted operations to a recovery site at least once in the past five years



**30% OF COMPANIES**

have lost revenue in the last 12 months due to a business or service outage

# 23%

of companies never test their BCDR plans

## Testing makes BCDR plans stronger

By testing your plans annually, you will make your teams more aware of the processes involved to adequately recover from a disaster event. You'll also uncover many gaps in your recovery processes. That's a good thing: **It's better to encounter issues during testing than discover them during an actual disaster.**

### 01 | START WITH A WALK-THROUGH

Perform a planned walk-through prior to any scheduled test. If you notice incorrect or irrelevant information in your plan, you can use this time to make updates prior to testing.

### 02 | RUN A TABLETOP EXERCISE

A tabletop exercise is an activity in which key personnel gather to discuss various simulated emergency situations in a non-threatening environment.

- All relevant stakeholders listed in the BCDR should participate, including senior leadership.
- Your test will only be as good as your team's involvement, so participants should be prepared to thoughtfully engage.

### 03 | TEST DIFFERENT SCENARIOS

While your BCDR plan should apply to any scenario, different disasters have different nuances. It's important to ensure your company is prepared for anything. Don't just test the same scenario over and over — mix it up and be creative.



**\$1 BILLION+**  
Damage caused by an average of 11.9 climate and weather disasters each year



**OVER \$1 MILLION**  
Average cost of data loss to companies in 2019

## Helpful scenarios to test

### CYBERATTACK

Companies should be prepared to take swift action when their operations are threatened by ransomware or other cyberattacks. **A cybersecurity tabletop should include your IT and/or cybersecurity team**, who can make decisions about how best to prevent downtime and data loss.

### PANDEMIC

Companies can minimize the business impact if they develop and test an effective plan for most employees to work from home. **That includes providing training and practice** so all employees feel comfortable using videoconferencing, collaboration platforms and other tools.

### SEVERE WEATHER

Even companies headquartered outside high-risk zones should test severe weather scenarios. **Testing will allow you to confirm where employees would shelter in place**, how the company could assist with recovery and how to handle PTO when employees without phone or internet can't call in.