

# A Disaster Recovery Checklist

These disasters could be anything from hurricanes, snowstorms, fire, toxic spills, and computer hackers. As a business owner and employer, you need to be able to recover from a disaster as quickly as possible. Your livelihood as well that of your employees depends on it. You need a plan to restore your organization's critical business functions.

To have a successful recovery process, you need to make plans well in advance. Plans for backup systems, locations, and equipment should be in place to minimize down time.

You should have emergency telephone numbers nearby for easy access. Include telephone numbers for the police, fire department, ambulance, poison control center, and the nearest hospital.

You may also want to have non-emergency telephone numbers on hand for facilities such as the local emergency management office, local American Red Cross chapter, insurance representative or risk manager, and staff emergency office.

- Gather staff at a predetermined location off-site. Assign tasks and review salvage priorities.
  - Conduct a damage assessment. Verify that the building is safe to enter.
  - Set up a command center with office equipment (computers, photocopier) and communications tools (walkie-talkies, cellular phones). If necessary, rent space away from your facility.
  - Notify emergency officials and your insurance company of the extent of damage.
  - Set up a secure salvage area with locks, fans, tables, shelves, plastic sheeting, drying materials and clean water.
  - Appoint an employee to serve as a media liaison to report conditions and need for help/volunteers.
  - Verify financial resources: amount and terms of insurance, and government assistance.
  - Contact service providers for generator, HVAC, plumbing, freezer, etc.
  - Arrange for any repairs to your security system.
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- Because some building contents may be contaminated, do not enter without current tetanus shots, protective gloves/clothing, hardhat, and NIOSH-approved respiratory mask.
- Identify and repair structural hazards. Remove debris from floor.
- Reduce temperature and relative humidity immediately to prevent mold outbreak. Ideal conditions are less than 70° F/45% relative humidity.
- If it is warm outside, use the coldest air conditioning setting; cover broken windows with plastic.
- In cool, low-humidity weather, open windows and use circulating fans. However, if mold is already present, do not circulate air.
- Do not turn on heat unless required for human comfort.
- Remove standing water and empty items containing water; remove wet carpets and furnishings.
- If everything is soaked, use commercial dehumidification.
- Purchase any supplies necessary to the cleanup and protection of property.

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- Once authorities allow you to enter the building, conduct a thorough walk-through. Wear protective clothing.
  - Use a video camera, digital camera or Polaroid-type camera to make a visual record of the conditions of the building and its contents. Take multiple shots if necessary to get a clear picture of damage.
  - Take notes and use a tape recorder to accompany photographs. Documenting the damage is essential for insurance, and it will help you with recovery.
  - Never move objects without first documenting their condition.
  - Assign employees to keep written records of contacts with insurance agents, adjusters, other investigators, and of staff decisions on retrieval and salvage.
  - Document each step of the salvage and recovery procedures using visual, written, and voice means.
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- If the environment is stable and secure, leave undamaged items in place. Otherwise, move the items to a secure, dry area.
  - If the entire building is wet, protect all objects with loose plastic sheeting.
  - Give priority to undamaged items when moving furniture, equipment, documents and records, etc.
  - Retrieve all pieces of broken objects and label them.
  - Check items daily for mold. If you find mold, handle the objects with extreme care and isolate them.
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- Notify your insurance representative and/or risk manager immediately to determine if you need an on-site evaluation before taking action.
- Prepare a rough estimate of the type of materials, furnishings and equipment affected and the extent and nature of damage. A detailed evaluation can slow recovery now.
- Look for threats to worker safety. Provide appropriate protective gear and equipment. Determine status of security systems.
- Look for evidence of mold. Document how long the materials have been wet as well as the current inside temperature and relative humidity.
- Set up salvage priorities. Establish groups of materials and equipment, not individual items. Your first protection efforts and salvage work should be on:
  - Your vital records and documents such as employee and accounting records and database backups.
  - Items that will deteriorate further if they go untreated.
  - Materials and equipment with a high likelihood of successful salvage.