

36 Disaster Response Questions to prepare for (and survive) the coronavirus

Quick Tips:

- Don't panic but do plan
- Show concern for your employees – give them an opportunity to share their concerns and ask questions. Consider having an education session with a nurse or doctor
- Show concern for your customers. For any customer/client meetings, offer the opportunity to meet virtually. For your business customers/clients, share your wisdom on protecting their business and planning a response.
- Communicate and educate frequently
- Brainstorm with every department – How might you be affected?
- Brainstorm possible options to mitigate the impact
- Document what you will do, when you will do it and who will be responsible

Questions about your employees:

1. How can you protect best your employees??
2. Will you train your employees on how to identify coronavirus symptoms?
3. If an employee does not have available sick time, how do you make sure they do not come to work if they are sick?
4. How will you respond if an employee is diagnosed with coronavirus?
5. Who can work from home?
6. How will your employees get access to the necessary information and documents they need to work from home?
7. Will you allow employees to travel?
8. If employees must travel, what steps will you take to ensure their medical safety?
9. How will you respond if an employee needs to care for an infected family member?
10. If an employee contracts coronavirus will they only be allowed to use their accrued sick time?

Questions about your operations:

11. What parts of your business are crucial to keep operating?
12. When should you exclude visitors from your offices?
13. How will you decide if you need to close an office?
14. Will you close your business for the recommended 2-week quarantine or longer?
15. How will you disinfect your office?
16. How will keep employees, customers, and vendors informed?
17. Should you postpone, meetings, events, or travel?
18. How will you communicate with employees, customers, and vendors if you have to close your offices?
19. Is your IT system robust enough to handle the demand if more employees are working from home?
20. What are the requirements for notifying employees and customers?

Questions about your finances:

21. If your offices are closed, how will you collect payments?
22. How long can your business survive without any new sales?
23. How will you pay your bills and payroll if your office is closed?
24. Do you have available lines of credit?
25. Will you pay your employees and for how long if you close your office? What are your legal responsibilities? Are the requirements different for salaried vs. hourly employees?
26. If an employee contracts coronavirus will they only be allowed to use their accrued sick time?

Questions about your customers:

27. Will you notify customers if an employee is diagnosed?
28. How will you stay connected to customers if employees are out sick or the office is closed?
29. How will you deliver on contracts if the office is closed or there is a disruption in your supply chain?

30. Do you have a “force majeure” clause in your contracts?
31. How will you respond if a customer is affected by the coronavirus and does not pay your invoice on time?
32. Are there ways you can assist your customers in addressing the coronavirus?

Questions about your supply chain:

33. Who are your mission-critical vendors?
34. Which vendors should you call to discuss their coronavirus plans?
35. Do you currently source any supplies or products from China or other affected country?
36. How would a delay in delivery of materials and products affect your production?
37. Do you have any sole-suppliers?
38. Can you find alternate suppliers?

This is not an all-encompassing list but a place to get started thinking about your response. While you might say, “*I hope it never happens to me*” – hope is not an effective strategy. The worst time to try and figure out your response is in the middle of a crisis. There are too many pressures, emotions are running high, and no one is thinking clearly.

Developing a disaster recovery plan is like buying life insurance, you hope you never have to use it but if you do you are really glad it is there!

Additional Resources:

- Faster Disaster Recovery: Developing a Business Continuity Plan, Jennifer Elder, CPA, Wiley Publishing, <https://amzn.to/32IT0NQ>
 - Coronavirus and Business Continuity Planning, <https://go.aws/2TvVyLc>
 - Centers for Disease Control (CDC), cdc.gov
 - Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) shrm.org
 - US Department of Labor, dol.gov
 - Employment Attorney
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- Insurance Carrier – Loss prevention department