

Be prepared in case disaster strikes

It seems every time you turn on the news, there's another disaster somewhere: Flooding, tornadoes, hurricane winds, fire, earthquake. No one expects a disaster to happen to them, but that's why we have insurance, a spare key with the neighbor, backup our data, and so on. Here are some tips that will help you be prepared.

Passwords

Many of our clients click 'remember my password' for remote desktop login to our cloud or their private cloud. Although convenient, if you have to use a backup log on icon, or your computer needs to be rebuilt, you'll need that password. Don't write it down or leave it in your drawer — keep passwords in an online vault, secure safe, lock box, or some other locked area.

Backups

There are a lot of ways to back up your data. Have you checked your backup

lately to be sure it has data on it? Is the data current and intact? Be sure you know if it is a backup of files that can be restored to a new machine once it is built and software installed, or an image that can be restored to replacement hardware. If it's accounting data, do you have a way to install the program so the data can be accessed? If your backup is 'in the cloud' do you know how long it would take to download the data from the cloud in an emergency? This is highly dependent on your internet speeds and the size of the data.

Power

Do you have a generator to keep your fridge and sump pump running? That's



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great, but it won't run your computers. This type of generator creates 'dirty' power that cannot be used by computer equipment. Make sure batteries are fully charged, and consider a spare battery for your laptop. Your internet Service equipment also needs power, so even if your computer is on battery, you may not have internet access.

Some cellphones have a 'hot spot' service so they can be used to provide internet access. Consider purchasing a battery pack for your cellphone so when it loses its charge, you have a way to charge it. In an emergency, you may not have access to electronic lists of family names, client names, employee phone numbers, and so on. Plan ahead by having the office print an updated list of names and phone numbers each Friday, and be sure it is available to you and your staff.

Procedure

What if a key staff person had a life-changing event and became

unavailable? Five years ago, I was one of those people, and I have to tell you, our staff was outstanding, above and beyond; I am so blessed. We were able to weather that storm because we had procedures for critical functions. Consider what critical roles would need to be covered if a staff person were unavailable; do you have a procedure that could be followed. Do you know all the things that person touches. Take this opportunity to tell your staff how valuable they are, and get their critical tasks in writing, for you, and for them.

We have clients who spend a few weeks away in the summer, but they also want to stay connected to the office. This level of planning will help you enjoy your time and keep things running smoothly at work, even in the wake of an unexpected disaster. Being prepared is a lot of planning, but it is both a responsibility and a necessity.

• Catherine Wendt is president of Syscon Inc., a technology solutions business based in Hinsdale.

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