

## Operation CAPA

### ***Four keys to business survival and resiliency***

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09/04/2009 ( 4:32pm)

The 21st Century is barely a decade old and the United States has already dealt with some of the most catastrophic incidents in our nation's history; most notably, the September 11th attacks and the 2005 hurricane season that consisted of Dennis, Katrina, Ophelia, Rita and Wilma. We now enter the 2009 flu season with an H1N1 pandemic underway that threatens to team up the seasonal flu and disrupt your workforce with widespread illness. Make no mistake, it's not a matter of "if", it's a matter of "when" an incident will impact your business.

Whether you call it business continuity, disaster or emergency preparedness, disaster recovery, crisis management, or some other term—it comes down to preparing your organization to survive a crisis. Every business must have some level of preparedness and resiliency to survive the myriad threats that are growing in scale and severity. Larger companies typically have a robust program to make their business more resilient, complete with staff trained in professional practices and holding certifications from organizations like the [Disaster Recovery Institute International \(DRII\)](#) and/or the [Business Continuity Institute \(BCI\)](#). In addition, standards are emerging (e.g., [NFPA 1600](#), [BS25999](#) and [ASIS SPC.1-2009](#)) that will eventually lead to a common process for business resiliency and the Department of Homeland Security will be certifying businesses to those standards via the [PS-PREP program](#).

These certifications and standards are fine for larger businesses, but millions of small-medium sized businesses don't have the resources to implement a comprehensive preparedness/resiliency program. However, the good news is there are many things a resource challenged business can do. [The Homeland Security & Defense Business Council](#) is helping by launching "Operation CAPA" at the [Partners in Preparedness Symposium & CEO Summit](#) on Tuesday, September 15, 2009 in Washington, DC. The mission of Operation CAPA is to help small—medium businesses enhance their state of preparedness and lead them toward resiliency. The objectives of this effort are to partner with target businesses to commit, assess, plan, and act. Specifically:

**Commit**—leaders and employees must commit to getting their business better prepared. This isn't a one-time "we support this—go get it done" project. It requires a sustained effort and constant reinforcement of leadership commitment. There's plenty of free information available on the Internet to help guide you through development of a plan, no matter how big or small. DHS established a great site to aid businesses on [ready.gov](#) and the small business association administration has [a disaster preparedness web site](#) that provides plenty of information to get started.

**Assess**—understanding the threats, vulnerabilities and impact to your business will help focus resources on planning for foreseeable events. Many businesses are unaware of the threats in their community. They may know about the natural threats (e.g., severe weather, earthquakes, volcanoes, etc.), but don't often know about the business next door that has hazardous/explosive chemicals, or the single power substation that is reaching capacity and will soon be causing power disruptions. You can work with your local fire department and emergency manager to understand the risks your business may face. We often tell businesses that you don't want to have your initial meeting with your first responders as they are running toward you with a fire hose. It's beneficial to both sides to meet ahead of time to get the appropriate data that will help you develop a workable plan.

**Plan**—keep it simple. In larger companies, planning is usually a separate component with a substantial amount of effort involved; however, for this simplified CAPA methodology, the planning element should include documenting your response and recovery plan and working with the community to

understand the expectations about how other business are preparing. You may find areas where you are competing for resources, or where you have opportunities to collaborate and provide mutual aid.

The readiness quotient is a free assessment that will highlight some areas that are often overlooked, but a good start on the path to preparedness. There are also checklists and sample plans available on ready.gov.

Act—your business survival depends on your ability to act; to be able to absorb the hit and keep operating at minimal levels while you restore to normal operations. Commitment alone will not get your business prepared, it takes action. Start by taking your readiness quotient assessment and going to ready.gov to get free checklists, sample plans and templates. Then, reach out to your local first responder community and other businesses to develop partnerships that will get you, your families, and your community better prepared.

While we hope bad things won't happen to our businesses, hope is not a strategy. Some day, something bad may happen and if it does, those who are prepared will get back to business. Commit, assess, plan and act today—join us at the Partners in Preparedness Symposium & CEO Summit on Tuesday, September 15.

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