

Is Your Business Prepared For Fire?

THE SCENARIO

It is 2am on a Wednesday morning. Your key contact member of staff receives a call from the Police. An oil tanker carrying fuel has careered off the road outside your main premises and collided with the front of your building.

The driver luckily escaped from his vehicle before it caught fire.

It is on fire and the Fire Service is currently battling the blaze.

DISCUSS and RECORD

- Who is your lead on Business Continuity?
- How do you activate your plan?
- Simulate a call to key team members at 2am on a Wednesday morning – ask each team member what they were doing at this time last Wednesday? Were any unavailable (out of the country, away from home, out for the evening, phone switched off, had a drink and so could not travel)?
- How do you communicate with all staff?
- As your building is still on fire where would you gather your team?
- Is your contact list up-to-date?
- Do you need to contact any of your suppliers or contractors?
- Do you have a communication cascade tree?
- Would anyone have been in the building when this accident happened?
- Who else do you communicate with?
- Record which team members were available if this happened last Wednesday. What about the previous Wednesday? Do you have a plan for key staff to be available on rota?
- Estimate how long it would have taken to contact people.
- How did you convene and hold a meeting (physically, via phone, via internet?)

A FEW HOURS LATER

SITUATION NOW

The Fire Service have extinguished the fire but there is a lot of water damage to the front of your building. Your premises are now a potential crime scene and a fire investigation is underway.

A police cordon is in place and you are currently not allowed to visit your premises while this is underway.

A structural survey will be carried out by local council building control officers to assess if it is structurally safe.

It is unlikely that you will be able to get your business up and running at its present location in the immediate future.

You have assembled your team at a pre-agreed location.

DISCUSS and RECORD

- Do you have an alternative location available?
- What resources would do you need?
- What information and data resources can you access – financial information, supplier/customer data, staff data?
- What offsite data can you access?
- Do you have a way of contacting staff, suppliers and customers without your on-site systems being active?
- What do you do about staff turning up for work unaware of the fire?
- Do you have insurance to cover the arrangements you are making?

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

SITUATION NOW

Your management team has convened but your premises are still off limits.

The Fire investigation is over and the council officers say that your building is structurally sound and can be repaired.

Fortunately most of the damage is cosmetic and only affects the exterior of your premises. However, it is unlikely you will be able to restart your business there until substantial repairs have been done.

The Police who have had a scene guard on during this time tell you they are now leaving the scene and its security is now your responsibility. There will be an investigation into the fuel truck driver's conduct.

DISCUSS and RECORD

- How would you provide security for the site now the Police are leaving?
- How would you go about clearing and cleaning up your premises?
- How would you go about delivering any outstanding orders that will need to be delivered soon?
- You have a delivery of supplies/important customer meeting at 9am tomorrow – what will you do about this?
- Could you still manage to run your regular (weekly/monthly) credit and debit run?
- What about staff – should they come to work? Can they work from home?
- Can they work somewhere nearby?
- The local media have called and asked how the fire is affecting your business. Who would speak to them and what would you say?
- Record your media statement. Does it help support and promote your business and your ability to manage a crisis?

A WEEK MONDAY

SITUATION NOW

The site is now being cleaned up and it is estimated that in a fortnight your business could begin to return to normal.

DISCUSS and RECORD

- What are your priorities?
- Are you able to relocate to another location?
- How will you be able to keep your customers' order filled?
- How will you manage suppliers?
- What can wait a fortnight?
- What still needs to be done and by when?
- How is your cash flow?
- How will you let suppliers, customers and the local community know you are back in business?

CONCLUSION: REVIEW & EVALUATE

- What went well?
- What did not go so well?
- How effective was your ability to contact your team?
- How effective was your information gathering and decision making?
- How could you manage financially if customers and suppliers were unable to trade with you? What if payments were delayed, how would your daily/weekly/monthly cash flow be affected?
- How well were you able to cope with finding alternative work or workplaces for your staff? Did you need to get additional staff and are they readily available?
- Are there any questions this scenario has raised that you will now look into?
- What lessons have been learned? How can this knowledge be used to improve your Business Continuity Plans?