

Is Your Business Prepared For A Power Cut?

THE SCENARIO

It is 1915 on a Friday.

Severe storms hitting the UK mainland have just brought down power lines at your local electricity substation effectively cutting off power to your business and the surrounding area. The whole neighbourhood where your major headquarters/factory is based is without electric power.

Due to severe storms immediately preceding this incident, the electricity companies and electrical contractors/suppliers are already overstretched reinstating the electricity infrastructure around the East of England.

Consequently all mobile power generators that could usually be called upon are not available as they are already in-situ at more critical installations. Contractors estimate they will be able to get parts and carry out repairs to restore power in your area in approximately five days' time.

You are in the run-up to delivering a large order to one of your major customers in two weeks time.

Your regular (weekly/monthly) credit and debit run is scheduled to take place in 3 days time.

DISCUSS and RECORD

- How would you hear about the power cut affecting your company?
- Who is your lead on Business Continuity?
- How do you activate your plan?
- Simulate a call to key team members at 19.15 on a Friday evening – ask each team member what they doing at this time last Friday? 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).
- Without power at your business where would you gather your team?
- Who else do you communicate with?
- Is your contact list up-to-date?
- Do you have a communications tree to contact staff?
- Record which team members were available if this happened last Friday. What about the previous Friday? 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

You have assembled your team at an ad hoc location.

DISCUSS and RECORD

- Without power what resources do you have to get your business up and running at its present location?
- What resources would you need to get it running effectively either at your present location or an alternative site (which you will need to find)?
- What information and data resources can you access – financial information, supplier/customer data, staff data?
- How would you contact your staff about coming into work over the weekend (if this happens regularly, if you think they'll be needed?) or on Monday?
- How would you contact your suppliers and customers?
- What offsite data can you access?
- Do you have a way of contacting staff, suppliers and customers without your on-site systems being active?
- Do you have insurance to cover the arrangements you are making?

MONDAY MORNING

SITUATION NOW

Your management team has convened but your premises are still without power.

Local schools are closed due to lack of power.

Local hospitals are advising that only those with emergencies should attend A&E due to the power cut. Some scheduled operations have been cancelled.

DISCUSS and RECORD

- How would you go about delivering the large order due to be delivered in two weeks time?
- How will you manage your inability to run your regular (weekly/monthly) credit and debit run due to take place on Wednesday?
- What about staff – should they come to work? Can they work from home (which might also be without power)? Can they work somewhere nearby where there is power?
- Some staff are not available because they have to care for children or other dependants who are without power.
- The local media have called and asked how the power cut 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?

THURSDAY

SITUATION NOW

Power has now been restored and your business can now begin to return to normality.

Schools, hospitals and other services are now operating as normal.

DISCUSS and RECORD

- What are your priorities?
- Can any company or organisation now operating normally help you get back to normal?
- What can wait until next week?
- What still needs to be done and by when?

CONCLUSION: REVIEW & EVALUATE

- What went well?
- What did not go so well?
- How effective was your information gathering and decision making?
- How well were you able to cope with staff shortages? Was it easy to think of ways to get additional staff and would they be readily available?
- 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?
- 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?