

DISASTER CHECKLIST FOR NEWSPAPERS

The newspaper has a very unique and important responsibility to the community in times of disaster and must plan to operate in a crisis. Developing a checklist of items leads to the development of a disaster plan, which will provide the publisher and staff confidence that they are prepared to fulfill their obligation to their community, neighbors, family and friends. In times of crisis you are needed more than ever!

PREPLANNING

Preplanning is the most important step in avoiding or knowing what to do in case of a disaster. Setting a calendar date each year to update the plan, review the list, make a new inventory tape, talk to employees, have a disaster training exercise, and other related matters is the easiest way to ensure this important item doesn't slip through the cracks in the hectic schedule of a newspaper.

CHECKLIST 1

Yes No

Pick a disaster – any disaster

- I have made a list of all possible disasters that might affect my newspaper. (Include blizzard, wildfire, tornado, flood, bomb, fire, sabotage, lawsuit, computer system failure, key employee death or disability, other types.)
- I have ranked the list of disasters from most likely to least likely.
- I have evaluated what areas of my operation would need to be restored first if a disaster strikes my whole paper, or just a portion of my business.

CHECKLIST 2

Yes No

We're OK here – How about YOU?

- I have made decisions on what to do if the newspaper avoids a direct disaster, but the disaster involves my town subscribers, advertisers, employees, a family member, independent contractors, or our key suppliers.
- I have made a list of steps to take (for all areas including news, advertising, legal notices, circulation, accounting, business operations, etc.) if one of these "contingent" disasters affects my newspaper.
- I have made a list of key employees we depend on for the basic newspaper function and what the key responsibilities of those employees are in order to get the newspaper published.
- Employees know what to do if the newspaper is spared, but disaster strikes their own homes or families.
- Employees know whether they can take vacation or sick leave for disaster-related absences.
- I have thought about what to do if an employee or a family member is killed or disabled by a disaster.
- I have set priorities on what additional lines of business (i.e. print shop, office supplies, book store, etc.) the newspaper might operate, and how they will be affected by the disaster.

CHECKLIST 3

Yes No

I'll get by with a little help from my friends

- I have made a list of which newspapers or businesses I will call on to help with critical newspaper functions.
- I have a list of their names, numbers, and critical functions they are to perform.
- I have documented my newspaper's technical configurations.
- I have a list of the software that is critical to publishing the paper.
- I have a list of other "non-publishing" software, such as accounting and circulation, that would be necessary to complete other functions of the newspaper.
- I have a list of the exact number and type of machines I need.
- I have a list of alternate phone numbers to use in case of a disaster.
- I know where to get Internet access and email for me and my staff.
- The staff knows where to assemble if the newspaper equipment or offices are unusable.
- If I print other newspapers, I know where I would send my customers.
- If I print other newspapers, I have a list of other printers and know what to tell them so they help my customers immediately.
- If I am printed elsewhere and my printer has the disaster, we have discussed where to go and what to do.
- We know what to tell carriers, post office workers, convenience store distributors and others in case there are changes in the method of delivery of the newspaper.
- The local police, fire and medical personnel know us, will vouch for us, and won't panic and shut us out when the TV stations and helicopters arrive on the scene.

CHECKLIST 4

Yes No *My insurance policy doesn't cover WHAT?!!*

- My insurance agent has been out to my newspaper in the last year to see my operation.
- My policy is tailored to specific needs of my newspaper; not a general policy.
- I know where my insurance policies are located, and keep them in a safe place.
- I have reviewed my policies in the past year with my agent.
- I have reviewed the list of my equipment and clearly understand what is covered by insurance and what is not.
- I have replacement cost insurance, including incidental costs.
- I have business interruption coverage, and know the length and limits of that coverage.
- I am certain my insurance policy covers all the risks that I listed above.

CHECKLIST 5

Yes No *But it's worth more than that to ME!*

- I know the true value of each piece of property.
- I know the true business interruption costs if I could not publish as usual.
- I can explain and justify these values to a claims adjuster.
- I have determined some items are minor and not worth covering.
- I have determined that some risks are unavoidable and have not covered them with insurance.
- I have decided it is not economically feasible to cover some property/risks.
- I have determined there are other factors influencing my decision to cover or not cover some property/risks.

CHECKLIST 6

Yes No *Let me show you around*

- Local fire personnel have toured my paper in the past year to familiarize their personnel with our building, hazards, exits, etc.
- Local medical personnel have toured my newspaper in the past year to make sure they know how to get in and out of the building in case of a medical emergency.
- Local police personnel have toured my newspaper in the past year to make sure they know about my property and can protect my paper in case of a disaster.
- I have made changes to my building, hazards, etc. since the last visit of my local fire, medical and police personnel.
- I have a copy of the layout of my newspaper, and a listing of addresses and phone numbers of key personnel.
- I have a listing of alternate addresses and phone numbers for key personnel.
- I have the newspaper layout and personnel lists in a secure, accessible place in case of a disaster.

CHECKLIST 7

Yes No *If I had to do it over again...*

- I have thought about what parts of my business I would change if I had to restart, from the ground up, the newspaper or any other businesses I operate.
- I have thought about what new offices and/or equipment would be required if my newspaper becomes damaged beyond repair.
- I have made a calculation about how much income I would need to keep the newspaper alive while waiting on insurance settlements.
- I know the state law on how many issues I can miss before I lose my status as a legal newspaper.
- I have thought about exactly how long it would take to restore my newspaper to normal operation after each type of disaster.

CHECKLIST 8

Yes No *Didn't we have something over there?*

- I have made a detailed, room-by-room inventory list of everything at the newspaper.
- My inventory also has descriptions and model numbers of all pieces of equipment and software.
- In the past year, I have made a videotape of my entire operation.
- I have set a date each year to videotape everything in the operation.
- I know if there is any "third party property" at my newspaper office.
- I have included "third party property" in my inventory list.
- I know if "third party property" is included in my insurance coverage.
- All employees understand whether their personal property would be covered by insurance.
- I have stored my paper's detailed inventory list and videotape in a safe and secure place.
- We know the location of all racks and how we would distribute newspapers if they were destroyed.

CHECKLIST 9

Yes No *I thought you knew how important that stuff was!!!*

- I have a written list of all vital records pertaining to my newspaper.
- I have backed up all my computer information.
- I have a regularly scheduled plan to back up all computer information.
- I store the back up information and copy of all vital records in a safe and secure place.

CHECKLIST 10

What would we do without you?

Yes No

- If the publisher does not serve as the disaster manager, the staff knows who will be in charge.
- I am emotionally and physically ready, willing and able to be the disaster manager for my newspaper.
- Our newspaper is prepared to be the hub of information for townspeople, before, during and after the broadcast media have left the area.
- I have made a list of immediate actions to take and which staff people are responsible for what items in the event of a disaster.
- I have the list stored in an easily accessible and secure place, and staff knows where it is.

CHECKLIST 11

Quiet on the set! And ... ACTION!

Yes No

- Our newspaper staff knows the basics of our action plan in case of a disaster.
- Our basic action plan includes important names and phone numbers.
- In the past year, we have had a fire drill or other disaster training exercise.
- We set a specific date each year to have a disaster training exercise.
- Our staff knows what to do if the disaster happens during working hours.
- Our staff knows what to do if the disaster happens when the office is closed.
- A copy of basic staff actions are posted in the building as a quick employee guide.
- Employees have a copy of the basic action plan and their responsibilities at their home.
- The employees know what records to safeguard.
- The employees know to minimize physical damage, such as location of fire extinguishers.
- I know which employees are trained for First Aid and CPR.
- I know which employees will be called away if the National Guard is called upon, or if they are volunteer fire, ambulance, police personnel.
- I have made contingency plans for the absence of those employees.

Many state press associations contributed to the development of this checklist.

DEVELOP AN ACTION AND RECOVERY PLAN

I can't believe this is happening!!!

In a disaster, one person should be in charge. That person will assess the situation, determine the priorities, gather available resources, initiate specific orders to staff, monitor follow-through on critical needs and make immediate changes to the plan as needed.

STEP 1 - Priorities in the event of a disaster

1. **PERSONNEL SAFETY.** Remove people from the disaster site and further danger. Administer first aid if needed.
2. **SOS CALLS.** Alert public safety authorities using the list you prepared.
3. **PROPERTY DAMAGE MITIGATION.** Turn off power, isolate or remove equipment, records, etc. Secure premises from unnecessary spectators or workers to eliminate danger and destruction of evidence.

STEP 2 - Follow the organization plan

1. **IMPLEMENT THE CHAIN OF COMMAND.** The person in charge (disaster manager) will deal with emergency and insurance personnel, loss consultant, public relations, and internal/external communications.
2. **IMPLEMENT THE EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY ACTIONS AND LIST.** Authorize and delegate to employees so they will implement subsequent phases of the plan's relocation, back-up resources, implementation of short term goals (i.e. we're not going to miss an issue), etc.

STEP 3 - Follow guidelines for short-term survival and long-term recovery

SHORT TERM SURVIVAL ACTIONS:

1. Gather the personnel needed to continue business – write, sell, publish, distribute.
2. Have them use appropriate backup facilities or an alternate site as set up in pre-plan.
3. Maintain records of all transactions, rentals, purchases and other recovery items for insurance.
4. Begin updating latest inventory list immediately while property and equipment are fresh in your mind.
5. Call frequent staff meetings to boost morale, uncover staff needs. Encourage input from staff members.
6. Recognize and deal with post-disaster stress of all involved parties. It is there whether seen or not.

LONG TERM RECOVERY:

1. Re-evaluate your business strategy. You are under no obligation to replicate loss.
2. Determine the true need to replace items in every affected area. Approach each with an initial evaluation. You may want to change some areas, eliminate others. A change in an affected area could make an undamaged area no longer compatible or necessary.
3. Work to solidify master recovery plan as you would to build a new business – from construction, to new equipment, to furnishings, to personnel.
4. Do not overlook the positive aspects of recovery and renewal. Inform your staff and community.
5. Plan a Grand Opening.