

Background On Business

Disaster Readiness Means Smart Business

(NAPSA)—Disasters, whether physical (hurricane, flood) or virtual (network breach), can occur anywhere and can paralyze, even destroy a business—but there are ways a firm can protect itself. Businesses located in disaster-prone areas might maintain a plan for disaster readiness but businesses everywhere should also be prepared, because virtual disasters can happen anywhere, at any time. In fact, the U.S. Department of Labor estimates more than 40 percent of businesses never reopen following a disaster. Of the remaining companies, at least 25 percent will close in two years.

Having a disaster preparedness plan in place can go a long way toward ensuring that your business doesn't meet this fate. The following tips will help you assemble a virtual business "go bag":

- **Use cloud-based software for storage and more**—Cloud-based software lets you store information in a secure, off-site location and access it from anywhere you have an Internet connection. For small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs), cloud computing solutions can allow employees to access work files and simultaneously edit documents from any location—even if they're unable to physically make it to the office.

- **Keep your technology updated**—Maintaining updated technology might prevent a virtual disaster from ever happening in the first place, since updates usually provide security patches and new protective features. Install updates whenever prompted to do so or adjust your PC's setting to install updates automatically.



Being properly prepared can help your company overcome disasters, natural or man-made.

- **Understand your insurance policies**—Many people don't take the time to read through all the fine print on insurance policies, but you don't want to find yourself doing so after a disaster strikes. Be sure you completely understand your insurance plans and policies, including which physical disasters are covered, what forms or filings need to be completed after a disaster and so on.

- **Get your finances in order**—A disaster might disrupt your business operations but rest assured, your financial obligations will hum right along. You'll still need to pay bills, make payroll and pay suppliers, so be certain you know what (or where) all these accounts are and have contact info for all these parties. Also, check to see that your financial management system is backed up properly.

For more information on helping your business prepare for and withstand the impacts of disaster, visit www.MicrosoftBusinessHub.com, where you'll find "Disasters happen. Is your business ready?"—a handy e-guide for SMBs.