



A changing of the guard: Our new commander-in-chief won't let his guard down-neither should we

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There was changing of the guard last November when the American people elected a new president. Barack Obama became the 44th President of the United States and he takes on the responsibility of being the commander-in-chief of our armed forces, to protect our country and making it safer.

The new president is our protector. I am fully convinced that he will put forth all of his efforts to strengthen our military might, to secure our borders and to protect our homeland. Needless to say, this shall be quite an undertaking and I don't envy one man's role in this great undertaking. The threats are all around us, outside of our borders and within. But we can help.

Threats, risks and vulnerabilities aren't only terrorist acts. Business emergencies can occur anyplace, anytime and come in a variety of forms.

All real estate administrators, building owners and managers must anticipate emergencies or disasters of any proportions. As a property owner or manager, you are undoubtedly aware of the long-term serious impact of a business interruption, and the related high costs associated with "down times." When a crisis occurs it is imperative that you have written, tested business continuity or a recovery plan; an emergency plan that has been reviewed, if not prepared, by emergency planning or business continuity specialists.

These specialists analyze every aspect of your business to assure that your business systems and processes can continue to operate with minimum downtime and with minimum loss of revenue. What you must have is a timely and effective recovery plan in order to maintain client confidence, optimal efficiency and productivity and virtually seamless un-interruption: "business continuity."

A viable business continuity and recovery plan has several essential ingredients. The plan must be a part of the corporation's governance doctrines. The plan should start with the establishment of a crisis management team who activates the formal, approved and tested business continuity and recovery plan in the event of an emergency or disaster.

The plan should provide for the establishment of an emergency command center, with a back-up command center location. The plan must have the provisions for worst-case scenarios such as when buildings are rendered inoperable or when operating IT systems are down. Are there redundant sites where back-up equipment, servers or mainframes, reside? Are nearby sites prepared to act as recovery sites where staff can operate out of with replacement workstations? Do employees have the accessibility to laptop computers and fax machines for use at their residences and the ability to access company back-up data networks to maintain company operations and to stay in touch with management?

Does your facility have a back-up emergency power generator? Is your operation critical enough to warrant a back-up generator in another location? When the World Trade Center was first attacked,

in 1993, its emergency generators in the sub-basement were also taken out.

Are there off-site storage of critical records and data? In particular, human resources records which will enable timely and efficient contact with employees and employees families?

There are outside sources available to assist any property owner and manager with regard to the routine backing up of data through on-line vaulting.

There are sources of hot and warm sites, sites that mirror your on-line data operations. There are mobile recovery services that will come to your geographical location and establish a temporary mobile data center within 24 hours. And there are computer equipment rental companies that can supply any equipment needs in 12 hours.

In addition to dealing with the continuity of business operations, the business continuity plan must include procedures to deal with safety of personnel, in specific, the evacuation of a facility, assigned responsibility and actions to be taken by personnel in the event of fire, explosion, flood, power outage or even civil unrest.

It is imperative that your evacuation plans are site specific and have been reviewed by members of top management, human resources, security and facilities. It is highly recommended that you use the services of an emergency planning consultant in this regard.

In addition to the establishment of the business continuity and recovery plan, there must be an ongoing program of testing the plan with emergency or disaster simulations and drills on a periodic basis.

Safeguards International, Inc., a business continuity planning provider, with on-staff IT recovery specialists, is prepared to assist all property owners and managers by performing the necessary business continuity assessments and risk/vulnerability analyses of your properties which will result in the preparation of "customized" business continuity and recovery plans, training and drills, necessary to assure minimum business interruption in times of need. Our new commander-in chief will not let down his guard and neither should we. Please contact me directly for any of your business continuity concerns.

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