

If you are responsible for business continuity management (BCM) within your organisation, this time of year presents an opportunity to improve your preparedness and raise awareness of BCM amongst your staff.

During the peak holiday season many staff will be taking their annual leave, resulting in fewer operational staff being around day-to-day and, importantly, fewer response and recovery personnel may be available at the time of a disruption.

With this in mind, we have put together our Top 20 list of hints and tips that may help you to ensure that your organisation is here today and here tomorrow.

Take this opportunity to prompt individual **business continuity plan owners** to:

- Make sure that their plan is up to date, including all contact details
- Check that everyone who might need to use the plan has ready-access to a copy and knows how to use it
- Consider whether there would be sufficient staff to conduct critical business activities. If you are concerned, make sure that other members of staff are briefed or that a hand-over is done
- Make sure they don't need to take their plan on holiday with them. If they feel they do, then there would appear to be a single point of failure which should be addressed

Remind those with **response and recovery roles**, before they go on holiday, to:

- Check that their deputies are going to be at work and available throughout their holiday. Make sure that extra deputies are identified and briefed to provide cover for key roles
- Review their plan so that it is fresh in their minds. Things sometimes go wrong, particularly when there are unusual circumstances, such as a heat wave or a sudden thunder storm or when there are a large number of staff away
- Include the contact details for their deputies in their 'out of office' message, to make sure that issues can be dealt with while they are away

Remind **all staff** to:

- File all documents securely before they go away on holiday, rather than leave them on their desk
- Ensure all critical data and information are backed up and secure
- Consider the implications if their travel arrangements are disrupted – for example, due to a volcanic ash cloud
- Make outline contingency arrangements if their return to work could be delayed
- If they feel unwell when they return, consult their doctor before returning to work – especially if they have any unusual or flu-like symptoms (consider legionnaires' disease, malaria, H1N1 for example)

Other considerations before **you** go away:

- Some organisations use their own staff to take back-up tapes off-site - check that holiday arrangements will not interrupt this process
- Speak to your key suppliers to make sure you understand whether they have any special holiday arrangements and to check that they are as well prepared as you are
- Consider conducting tests and exercises during the holiday season, such as call cascades or recovery of IT systems, specifically to highlight any gaps or weaknesses

And finally, **when you return** from your holiday, review what happened while you were away:

- Were there any disruptive incidents? If so, did the response go well?
- Have incident reports been produced?
- Are there any immediate issues arising from incidents, or otherwise, that you need to deal with?
- Consider whether you can make use of any material arising from incidents within your BCM process, perhaps as exercise scenarios or as awareness tools
- Identify any changes in your arrangements or procedures that may be needed, perhaps to your BCM process or how people with response roles are managed, to smooth the path for future holiday periods

We hope you find these suggestions useful and when the time comes for your own holiday, have a good one!

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