

What is your backup plan?

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By Frank Bourlon columnist

Are you prepared for a production stoppage? What have you prepared for? Is your backup plan complete?

Being prepared for any emergency is essential to the survival of the newspaper that you serve. If you don't have an emergency preparedness manual you should develop one. Then make sure all key personnel know about the manual, know what is in the manual, and how to use the manual well before any disaster arises.

Here are some tips. First, ensure the manual has relevant emergency phone numbers readily accessible in the event of a disaster. Ambulance, fire and police departments are just a few of the agencies whose numbers should be included. Make sure you also have numbers for government agencies, the publisher, owner (if applicable), general manager, production manager and other key personnel.

Second, have an emergency backup print site already to go. Ensure that you can use the facilities of nearby printers, if necessary, to produce and package your newspaper. Once a plan is established, test it.

Check your coverage

Third, check to make sure your newspaper has adequate business interruption insurance to cover the additional costs that will be incurred if an emergency comes your way.

Contact an insurance underwriter or carefully read the insurance policies yourself, then ask the agent any questions about the policy that you don't understand. If you assume that your insurance coverage covers every type of disaster you are probably wrong. It is up to you to make sure you have the appropriate coverage based on the amount of risk you are willing to bear.

Share the emergency plan with everyone involved to make sure they understand their role and to allow them to make suggestions for improvement. Your plans should be reviewed regularly to make sure all information in the plan is current.

Don't forget to include risk management as part of the plan. Determine if there are ways to reduce your risk of disasters, whether it's offering first aid training or installing more sophisticated computer protection software.

It is everyone's responsibility to work together and be prepared for a disaster that will likely someday strike your newspaper. Being prepared will keep your newspaper strong and able to provide the news to its subscribers while others fail to do so.

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