

PreparedBC: Guide for Small Businesses



Small businesses are integral to British Columbia's goods and services supply chain. In 2015, there were approximately 388,500 small businesses operating across the province, representing 98 per cent of all businesses in B.C.

If you are a small business owner, you have likely invested a significant amount of time, energy and money in your operation. Depending on its size, you may have employees that rely on it for income and stability.

Use this guide as a starting point to protect that investment and the people you employ by ensuring your business is prepared to be up and running as soon as possible following any type of emergency or business disruption.



Step 1 Know the risks

Hazards vary depending on where your business is located. Understanding the risks for your region will ensure your disaster planning is effective.

Top 10 risks in B.C.

- Earthquakes
- Severe Weather
- Tsunamis
- Power Outages
- Floods
- Hazardous Material Spills
- Landslides
- Wildfires
- Avalanches
- Disease Outbreaks

TIP: For additional information about potential hazards, visit the www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC for an interactive map of risks by regional district. It's also a good idea to contact your local authority to ensure all your bases are covered.



Mitigate potential threats:

If you have a business with a physical address (bricks and mortar), complete a hazard hunt. Identify and secure things that could fall during an earthquake and keep important documents and equipment off the floor that could be damaged by flooding.

Consider purchasing a back-up power source for use in a power failure and reinforcing or moving equipment that could fail as a result of a hazard occurring.

TIP: Other risks that businesses face are IT failures and cyberattacks. Be sure to consider these man-made risks as part of your planning as well.



Step 2 *Make a plan*

Thinking ahead means you will be able to respond quickly and effectively during an emergency. The following tips and questions will help you get started. For more detail, fill out the template PreparedBC: Emergency Plan for Small Businesses at www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC.

What are your business's core needs?

In other words, which procedures, systems, materials and equipment are absolutely necessary for ongoing operation? Which ones can tolerate being disrupted? Once you have prioritized your needs, plan for how you will re-open or continue operating.

- What will you do if your building, plant or store is not accessible? Can you run your business from another location? Identify your space and equipment needs.
- Can you work around certain functions by using manual processes?
- What suppliers, shippers, resources and other businesses do you rely on or interact with regularly? Discuss alternate arrangements with them or consider alternate sources and back-ups.
- Identify how back-up equipment will be utilized, such as a generator if the power goes out.
- Plan for payroll continuity (include yourself!)

TIP: **Form an emergency planning team. It will likely include people with technical skills, as well as managers and executives depending on the size of your business. In some cases it may make the most sense for the business owner to take on this function.**

Create key contact lists:

Develop contact lists of critical and emergency numbers and maintain easily accessible hard copies. It is important to update your lists regularly. The list may include, but is not limited to:



TIP: We're in it together. Reach out to the people you rely on or work with on the subject of preparedness – whether it is suppliers, service providers, property owners or neighbouring businesses. Working together helps ensure the business supply chain is not broken or can be fixed quickly. Your partners may also be able to provide assistance if something goes wrong for you.



Prepare your employees:

For your business to bounce back after an emergency, you need prepared employees. Your business plan should clearly outline staff roles and responsibilities. You also need to ensure employees are aware of their function during an emergency. Share your business plan and store copies (printed and electronic) in easily accessible locations.

It is also critical that staff are personally prepared for disasters. If you haven't already, visit www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC to learn how you, your family, employees and co-workers can get ready.

TIP: Have ongoing conversations about preparedness with staff. Make preparedness the subject of newsletters, email correspondence or other internal communications. Consider hosting preparedness evenings and invite your local expert to give a presentation.



Know how you'll get and share information:

Contact your local government's emergency management program to find out how it will share alerts and instructions during an emergency. The most important thing is to seek credible sources so you can make informed decisions during a disaster.

It is also critical that you plan for how you will communicate information and directions to staff, customers, clients and suppliers so your response and recovery is calm and orderly.

TIP: Date-stamp your plan. Indicate when it was last updated, how many copies were made and where they are stored. Be sure to replace all copies when updates are made.

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Facebook:

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Web:

- www.EmergencyInfoBC.gov.bc.ca for alerts
- www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC for preparedness tips



Step 3 *Prepare your business*

Stock emergency supplies:

You should have an emergency kit at your business, as well as at home and in your vehicle. Talk to your employees and co-workers about putting together their own kits to keep at work. In addition to basic supplies, remember to add personal items, such as prescription medications or an extra pair of eyeglasses. Always make sure emergency kits are in easily accessible locations.

TIP: Encourage staff to have portable emergency kits, customized to meet personal needs, such as essential medications.

Protect critical paperwork:

Protect your data on business computers. Perform regular backups and store critical information offsite on USB sticks, in cloud storage or as printed copies. It is always a good idea to use anti-virus software.

TIP: Review your insurance policy. Understand what your policy covers and what it does not. Ask about any deductibles and find out what records your insurance provider will want to see after an emergency. Store them in a safe place. For more information on insurance, visit www.IBC.ca.



Emergency supplies



First Aid kit and medications



Whistle to signal for help



Battery-powered or hand crank radio



Cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger



Battery-powered or hand crank flashlight with extra batteries



Local maps and some cash in small bills



At least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Manual can opener for cans



Water, four litres per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation



Dust mask to help filter contaminated air



Garbage bags, moist towelettes and plastic ties for personal sanitation



Seasonal clothing and footwear



Copies of important documents and backup data (e.g. printed, USB drive, cloud backup)



Copy of Business Emergency Plan

Know how to turn off utilities:

Know where your electrical panel, gas and water shut-off valves are located and how to turn them off.

IMPORTANT:

If you suspect a gas leak, ensure staff know how to turn off the valves.

NOTE:

Do not try to turn gas back on. Only a registered contractor can do that safely.

Sheltering-in-place:

For some emergencies, such as hazardous material spills, it may be safest to stay inside your facility. This is called sheltering-in-place. Be ready for this possibility by pre-identifying shelter-in-place rooms and making sure they have plastic sheeting and duct tape for sealing cracks around windows and doors.



Step 4 *Practice your plan*

Share the elements of your Business Emergency Plan with your employees and co-workers. Better yet, involve them in the planning process! Provide training on what each person's role and responsibility will be in an emergency.

Once training is complete, validate your plans by testing them. Run exercises or drills and meet together as a group afterwards to talk about what worked and what didn't (perhaps during Emergency Preparedness Week or for the Great British Columbia ShakeOut. Refine your plan as necessary.

TIP: A plan is a living document and should be reviewed and tested regularly, especially as new employees join your business or new supply arrangements are made.



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It's worth it:

Everyone makes excuses about why they haven't taken steps to prepare, but it doesn't have to be a huge undertaking. When a disaster occurs, you will see that the benefits far outweigh the costs:

- You can return to business-as-usual faster and continue serving your clients or customers
- Employees will be able to return to work more promptly
- Your company will be a role model in business resiliency and continuity
- Employees will be more resilient knowing how to protect themselves at home and work

TIP: Register your business for the Great British Columbia ShakeOut, the province's annual "drop, cover, hold on" earthquake drill. Learn more at www.shakeoutbc.ca.

Additional resources:

PreparedBC: www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC

Insurance Bureau of Canada: www.ibc.ca/bc/business

Emergency Preparedness for Industry and Commerce Council:
www.epicc.org

Business Resilience (New Zealand): www.resilientbusiness.co.nz

Ready.gov (USA): www.ready.gov/business

epicc

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