

Preparing Your Business for a Flood

This document was generated in part from the excellent work done by EPICC (Emergency Preparedness for Industry and Commerce Council). Please refer to EPICC's website www.epicc.org to learn more about EPICC, and for additional information to assist you with your business preparations.

British Columbia is prone to flooding due to our mountainous terrain and the wet weather that comes in from the Pacific Ocean. This information kit provides you and your business with an overview of key activities to help you prepare for and react to a flood event proactively (for more detailed checklists and templates, please refer to EPICC's business information kit <http://www.epicc.org/>)

The materials are intended to be used as guidelines – apply them to your unique circumstances as you see fit.

By preparing now you can significantly reduce potential losses and be back in business more quickly following a disaster. Your preparations and planning for a flood will be useful in dealing with many other types of emergency situations. Developing a plan helps you think through your needs, identify your key assets, organize a response and communicate expectations to your staff and customers. The plan will serve as a reminder to do certain things in the heat of the moment and give you a sense of control as you progress through the crisis.

Let's get started.

Consider the following steps for:

Preparing for a flood

- Know your risks
- Identify your critical assets and their exposures
- Protect your critical assets
- Create a plan to mitigate your losses and reduce your down time
- Review your plans and practice them regularly
- Assemble an Emergency Kit for the workplace

While the flood is occurring

- Life safety and security are paramount
- Ensure communications with key stakeholders
- Preparing to evacuate
- When order to evacuate

After the flood has passed

- Begin recovery
- Conduct a post-disaster review

Prepare for a Flood

Know your risks

- Find out if your business is located in the floodplain and/or behind a dike system. To do so, contact your municipality.
 - There are additional reference materials to look at after contacting your municipality. For example, Ministry of Environment's website for dike maps.
http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/public_safety/flood/index.html
- Check if workers, suppliers, customers and transport routes are located in high risk areas.
- Contact your local municipal or regional government to find out if there is a local flood phone number / web page to check for changes in the situation and what local authorities are doing.
- Be sure to tune into the local media for up to date information about weather conditions and flood advisories and if the local authorities are asking residents to evacuate or to be ready to evacuate. (Have a battery operated or wind up radio handy.)
- Stay informed and be sure you understand emergency messages and the stages of an evacuation alert. Check local or provincial authorities websites.
- Check the BC Provincial Emergency Program (PEP) website at www.pep.bc.ca for links to pertinent emergency information.
- Check the Emergency Preparedness for Industry and Commerce Council (EPICC) organization's web site for details and advice to businesses preparing for a flood:
<http://www.epicc.org/>
- Review your insurance coverage. Contact your agent and find out what is covered (equipment, income replacement, etc.).
- Take pictures of your facilities and major assets

Identify your critical assets and their exposures

- Staff members and their families
- Documents
- Information and information technology
- Major equipment and vehicles
- Facilities
- Stock and supplies
- Operational dependencies (suppliers, customers)
- *Add other specific items for your business...*

Protect your critical assets

Staff members and their families

- First aid training for some staff
- Emergency supply kit for workplace
- Support your staff in preparing family emergency supply kits (see PEP's website for more specific information www.pep.bc.ca)
- Develop contact lists, a phone tree, and a contact point outside of the impacted area
- Identify any employees who may need special assistance
- Cross train employees in key functions
- While preparing your workplace for a flood be sure to keep your staff safe and secure. For additional information on workplace insurance and occupational health and safety regulations see www.worksafebc.com or call 1866-WCB-HELP.

Documents

- Move critical documents to safe storage or offsite
- Protect paperwork in waterproof containers
- Examples of documents you will need:
 - Licenses and permits
 - Accounts receivable and accounts payable records
 - Cheque book and bank statements
 - Contracts, leases, insurance policies
 - Personnel records
 - Mailing lists
 - Suppliers list
 - Copies of software
 - Backups of computer data

Information and Information Technology

- Ensure information is secure and protected
- Ensure electronic information is backed up regularly and stored offsite
 - Offsite storage should be outside of impacted area
- Raise critical computer equipment off ground or basement levels, or move to higher floors or out of impacted area
- Computer equipment should be turned off if you have to evacuate the building
- Keep current records of technical configuration of information technology infrastructure
- Keep current records of computer equipment inventories offsite
- Create documentation for restoring computer equipment. Verify procedures with computer technology restoration experts.

Major equipment and vehicles

- Remove all hazardous materials to prevent pollution of the flood waters
- Move any equipment you can above the water line / away from the impacted area

- Equipment that can not be moved should be readied for storage and protected from water as much as possible
 - Unplug the equipment
 - Remove motors in equipment if recommended by the manufacturer
 - Shut off gas supply at the appliance and at the meter
 - Turn off the water supply
 - Turn off electrical power to your premises
- Forward your phone and fax lines to numbers outside the impacted area
- Move vehicles to high ground with full fuel tanks

Facilities

- Put plastic sheeting and/or sand bags at doors and other points where water could enter the building
- Protect major appliances (furnace, hot water heater, etc) by turning off fuel and water supply lines
- Secure the building

Stock and supplies

- Move valuable stock and supplies to upper levels / off the ground
- Protect shelving and display units from water by moving them or wrapping them in plastic

Operational dependencies

- Contact suppliers to halt deliveries until after the crisis has passed
- Contact customers to let them know that you will be working on alternative avenues to meet their requirements but that some delays are expected
- Contact your insurance agent for advice on mitigating your losses

Create a plan to mitigate your losses and reduce your down time

- Identify critical products and services
- Estimate maximum amount of time you can stop delivering the critical products and services
- Identify critical inputs (e.g. suppliers, people, processes, systems, infrastructure, etc.)
- Develop mitigation strategies to protect critical assets
- Develop strategies to continue operation of your business
- Consider alternate locations to operate

Create contact lists and keep up-to-date

- Employees
- Customers
- Suppliers and vendors
- Other key stakeholders (emergency services)

Make copies of your plans

- Ensure plans are held by your key personnel in a safe place (on and offsite)

Review your plans regularly and practice them

- Walk through your plans with your key staff
- Practice your plan under different scenarios to identify any gaps or weakness

Assemble an Emergency Kit for the workplace

Your emergency kit should include enough supplies for each employee for at least 72 hours.

- First aid kit with manual
- Water (4 litres per person per day)
- Energy bars and dry food
- Cans of food and a manual can opener
- Battery or crank powered radio with extra batteries
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Water proof bags
- Work gloves, rubber boots, and dust masks
- Space blanket and towels
- Candles and water proof matches
- Toiletry kit
- A whistle
- Rope
- Hammer, nails, pliers, screwdriver, utility knife
- Reading material
- Duct tape and plastic sheeting

While the flood is occurring

Life safety and security are paramount

Ensure Communications with key stakeholders

- Keep informed through community messaging from media and local authorities.
- Keep staff, customers and other business partners informed of your situation.

Preparing to evacuate

- Check that your grab and go bag is complete (medicines, extra glasses, etc.)
- Pack any other irreplaceable items
- Ensure your children stay close to home and are ready to leave at a moments notice
- Have pets, their food and other gear ready to go.
- Contact your business stakeholders and keep them apprised of the situation as required

When ordered to evacuate

- Follow evacuation routes recommended by the authorities
- Do not drive on submerged roads. The waters may be deeper than they appear and water could be moving fast.
- Be particularly careful driving at night.
- If rising waters prevent your escape get to a rooftop or high ground with your emergency supplies and wait for help to come to you.
- Get to a shelter or agreed assembly point and let people know you are safe
- Use your phone tree communications plan to find out how others are doing
- Be patient
- Volunteer if you are able to help

After the flood has passed

Begin Recovery

- Assess the damage with your key people, insurance representative and any required authorities to ensure the workplace is safe and recovery requirements are determined.
- Contact restoration companies that can assist you in your recovery (here's a helpful link to finding restoration companies in BC <http://www.insurancewest.ca/servicesandsuppliers.shtml>)
 - Document retrieval companies
 - Clean up crews and equipment
 - Temporary help
- You may be able to set up a temporary worksite to operate from
- Rent equipment
- Work with suppliers and others to find alternate ways to supply your customers
- Use manual systems until your computerized systems are up and running
- Identify alternate suppliers if necessary
- Contract out some of the work
- Clean and disinfect the building as necessary
- Clean and restore the equipment as necessary
- Assess your staff stress level and seek counseling if necessary
- Celebrate your successes as you move toward productivity
- Let your customers know that you are back in business
- Be prepared to share your resources

Conduct a post-disaster review

- Reassess your plans
- Document lessons learned and corrective actions
- Ensure these actions are completed
- Rebuild your business
- Conduct post traumatic stress debriefing with your staff