



## [INSIDE INDUSTRY]

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# Preparing, protecting your critical subsets before a disaster

In an article in the February 2009 issue of BIC, I discussed housing critical subsets before, during and after a disaster. Here, I'll outline how to prepare and protect these subsets.

First, even though surreal to consider, disasters, like hurricanes, temporarily destroy major infrastructures. Secondly, consider the

loss of all forms of communication, including cell phone usage.

Your safest approach to preparedness is to assume that you will have no food, money, electricity and communication. That's what we did prior to Hurricane Ike in Southeast Texas, and, as a result, experienced no loss of business and was even able to house a

major petrochemical company that returned to find 11 feet of salt water in its facility.

First, identify what personnel you will need, when you will need them and where you will need them before, during and after a disaster. It's likely you'll identify varying levels of need. For example, we determined who we needed to stay in the building during the storm, who we needed to return within 24 hours and who we needed to hear from within 48 hours. We communicated our needs to every employee — his role, where to go, who to call and when.

Consider you may be living in your facility after the storm, so determine who will cook, who is going to do the cleaning, the grocery shopping and general maintenance. Everyone will wear multiple hats. Communicate in advance what the expectation is.

Days before Hurricane Ike hit, we gave employees time off to evacuate their families. If you have notice of a disaster, you must allow your employees to secure their families. No employee can concentrate on working when he is worried about loved ones. Take care of your employees and allow them to take care of their families first!

If you have determined that certain employees will stay through the storm and have a schedule for others to return, you'll have to make provisions with the proper authorities allowing these employees to return. If an evacuation is in effect in your city after a disaster, secure passes to re-enter the city before the storm hits.

Once your employees are in the city, you'll need to provide for their living. In our situation, people could return to work but not necessarily return to their homes. We had to house them — and provide office space for 30 of the petrochemical company's folks — for up to a week. We stocked up on groceries, toiletries and other necessities, such as gas, water, ice and canned foods. I recommend at least a three-day supply. After that, grocery stores usually open and gas is available again.

We also secured generators and a Very

Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) satellite dish, which allowed us to have electricity and communications even when the entire city was black. These were secured because we had identified phones and data processing capability as two critical subsets in advance.

There are several ways you can secure phones at the time of a disaster. The simplest action is to implement call forwarding. Forward each company phone line to a cell phone. If one line rolls over to another, even forward that rollover line to an employee's cell phone. Even if the telephone pole outside your facility is knocked down, since call forwarding is handled at the phone company's main switching office, your call forwarding is going to work.

A more advanced approach to securing phones is to have multiple lines coming into your building from various places and serviced by competitors. This will better your chances that at least one of the lines is not going to be damaged and you'll still have communication.

The simplest way to provide electricity during a disaster is with a gas-powered generator with capabilities to keep a room or two air-conditioned. A more advanced approach is a natural gas generator connected to a municipal service that will run your entire building.

Broadband access is critical to our business, therefore, we also secured a VSAT prior to the storm. This dish connected us to a private telecommunications network. We used it not only for telephones and data during Hurricane Ike but also connected another 15 phone lines to it for the petrochemical company.

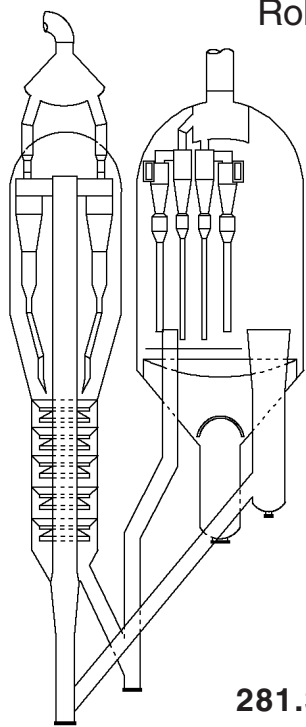
The key to disaster preparedness is identifying critical subsets and determining how to secure, protect, provide and maintain them through a disaster and afterward. I encourage every business owner to write and communicate a disaster preparedness plan. In the long run it will save you major money.

For more information, call (800) 839-1645 or visit [www.applicationfactory.com](http://www.applicationfactory.com). □

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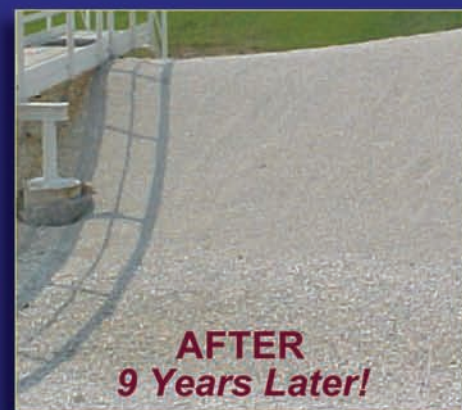
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