

Facilities Information For Disaster Recovery Preparedness

Dean Koyanagi
Graphic Systems, Inc.

You may have a business continuity plan to handle foreseeable FM related crises. But will you have the information needed to make decisions when situations change?

Since September 11, companies and institutions who have never planned for a crisis are now taking an entirely new perspective on business continuity planning. As a result, facilities managers are being asked to be ever more sophisticated in their planning and response capabilities. Much has been written about the creation of recovery plans, training, and other forms of preparedness. But the availability of critical information needed for decision making beyond the “plans” that can occur during and after a crisis is often overlooked by many business continuity plans until an event actually occurs.

Military leaders have long known that battles can be won or lost because of the availability of information on factors such as location of resources, their status and the conditions of the battle field. In a facilities related crisis, it may become critical to have additional information on where people are located, what resources are still available and what equipment is operational because, as we all know, not everything goes as planned.

Many organizations in the United States have Computer Aided Facilities Management (CAFM) and Computerized Maintenance Management Systems (CMMS) of varying complexities, integration and accuracy. A number of these systems use drawings and data as part of their business continuity planning process because, if managed correctly,

these systems maintain some of the very information that is needed most by business continuity planners. But will you have this data and be able to use it in crisis?

Planning for Disaster

One should initially take an Information Inventory to see what type of data you have currently, and where it can be improved upon. For Example:

- ◆ **Building Related Information:** Property or lease documents, floor plans, location and types of hazardous materials (Material Safety Data sheets) Does your system carry data on rooms (e.g., how many and location of data jacks in a conference room)? Are there rooms designated as emergency “backup space” with identified resources (power and data jacks for a set number of computers)?

- ◆ **People information:** Emergency Contacts, occupants of the building (including contractors) and their assigned locations.

- ◆ **Asset information:** Heavy equipment and systems like elevators, pumps, generators, air conditioners, etc.

- ◆ **Technology systems** like power backup, phone and data closets, etc. and the areas that they serve.

- ◆ **Information Systems:** Data Center and equipment locations, emergency contacts, and offsite data storage site info.

Too often a crisis occurs and critical information is locked in someone’s office or on a computer that is temporarily inaccessible. Having this information loaded on a laptop

computer, and perhaps some basic printed drawings that are stored in a location easily accessible by emergency personnel, could be a critical difference in decision making during a crisis. Some companies even maintain this information offsite at a location that can be accessed 24/7 should the need ever arise. Data redundancy is critical in case a building is destroyed where the FM data is maintained.

From this core data, you can add qualitative data about occupants, spaces and equipment. Working with your business continuity staff, you can determine which personnel and groups need to be back up and running first? Where are they located? What do they need to be operational? Can you query your data to show layout maps of where mission critical relocated workers can temporarily displace less critical personnel or go to vacant spaces with computers and phones at the ready? If a problem shuts down one floor or an entire building for an extended time period, can the effected people be accommodated remotely? Or, can they be slid into "swing space" in another property or area of the building?

Haven't We Done This Before?

Many Facilities Management departments helped to prepare lengthy Y2K disaster recovery plans for their organizations. Most of these plans were then left without being updated until after 9/11. Much of this information, if properly maintained in your CAFM and CMMS systems, could serve as the foundation of scenario planning for your Disaster Recovery planning and response procedures for the future.

One parting thought...

In the preparation of this article the author spoke with several former clients and FM professionals who are looking at, or are currently using their FM related systems, for disaster recovery and contingency planning. Almost universally they felt it would be unwise to publish details of their data, its sources, or exactly how they are prepared to use this data in a crisis. There is a growing realization that this information needs to be looked at as a potential security risk to their organization should someone wish to disrupt their operations.

About the Author

Dean Koyanagi is an FM Project Manager with Graphic Systems, Inc. (Cambridge, MA and Washington DC) and a former anti-terrorist specialist in the United States Marine Corps. He has a degree in Facilities Planning & Management from Cornell University. Mr. Koyanagi can be reached at dkoyanagi@graphsyst.com or through GSI's web site: www.graphsyst.com.

Sidebar:**A Scenario for Business Continuity**

A fire in the ceiling on one floor temporarily closes access to a small section of a single floor. It's Sunday, and you can't find the manager who runs that department, but the Business Continuity Plan says that the department has 36 people and all are listed as critical employees. So off you go on a search for temporary space for 36 people, renting some vacant space in a nearby office building (with a pre-planned relationship) and setting up some surplus computers and phones on folding tables. You've called in people from Telecom, IT, tech support and the boss' brother-in-laws' moving company, just like the plan calls for. You spend the money knowing that this department will be up and functional on Monday morning, and you've played it straight from the book.

The Fly In The Ointment:

However, what the list of mission critical people failed to say was that 20 people are on a special project and are located in another building, 10 are onsite at customer locations fulltime, two are out on extended sick leave, and two others telecommute and only share a desk whenever needed. The manager and her secretary are the only two "mission critical" people still in that area of the floor and she's on vacation, which is why you can't reach her at home.

Reality:

Even the best FM database probably won't tell you who's on vacation, but if you set it up to reflect things like known telecommuters, temporarily assigned teams and even locations of contractors, you could have saved yourself from making a costly error. And by working closely with your Business Continuity group, you should be able to reach someone beside the initial contact for additional information about the group(s) in question.