Deliver the message, no matter what the weather.

Business can be interrupted by weather in many ways. Heavy use of air conditioners during a summer heat wave can overwhelm the electrical grid, causing brown outs and interrupting the workday. Heavy rain can turn a parking lot into a river, making it impossible for staff to get to the office. Hurricanes, blizzards or tornadoes can cause property damage, shut down operations and pose harm to employees.

To keep your business productive no matter what the weather, use these ten best practices as your guide:

1 Regularly review your BC/DR plan – Companies grow, staff changes, responsibilities shift and equipment is upgraded frequently. When changes like this take place, your BC/DR plan must change too. Schedule regular reviews to ensure your plan evolves with your company, and you're prepared when severe weather strikes.

2 Develop clear channels of communication – Even in the midst of a violent storm, it's critical that your company has clear and effective channels of communication so you can quickly assess damage and coordinate recovery. Use your notification system to alert colleagues, vendors, partners and customers who may be impacted by your business interruption.

3 Gather the right contact data – Your notification system is only as powerful as your contact database allows. Include email addresses, work phone, home phone, cell phone, pager, home address, fax number, etc., along with the person's title, primary location, level of authority, department and duty shifts.

4 Keep your contact data up to date – As well as being complete, your contact data must be current. Develop incentives to persuade all personnel to keep their contact information updated. A clean and current database is key to accurate and efficient notification even in the worst weather scenario.

5 Create escalation plans – Crises need immediate response from decision-makers, and notification helps you implement an effective escalation process. When delays are inevitable because of severe weather, notification can help you meet SLAs (service level agreements) by escalating issues until all concerns are addressed and resolved.

6 Pull your team together – Use the call bridge feature to invite recipients to join a conference call with one touch on their keypad, creating a virtual conference room in minutes. Bringing key personnel together will help you make critical decisions quickly and agree on how to handle a situation.

7. **Educate your staff** – It's important to train personnel on how to use your notification system so they can send alerts and understand how to monitor the entire alert process. Studies show that companies who educate their employees correctly before a weather event happens get better, more meaningful response and reaction rates.

8. **Test your plan and systems** – Test your alert system regularly and address any glitches quickly. Many companies test as often as twice a month to make sure that staff is familiar with the system and that contact data is current—both essential when a real weather emergency strikes.

9. **Establish a post-event follow-up plan** – A heavy storm can take a toll even after the sky has cleared so your BC plan should outline procedures not only for recovery, but also for follow-up. A final message once a situation is resolved will help refocus your staff on productivity.

10. **Review, evaluate and adapt** – Once your plan has been tested by a real weather event, send a notification that elicits comments from staff to find out what worked and what didn't. This will not only garner useful planning tips for the next weather interruption, but will also let your employees know that you value their observations.

Use your notification system wisely to keep your business on track and your customers, vendors and employees informed, no matter what the weather. Learn more great ways to use automated notification at www.mir3.com.

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