

How would we bounce back?

Emergency preparedness pays attention to business

Looking like the emergency command center from a disaster movie, a dedicated command room exists at the offices of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, situated near the Dardani campus of Truckee Meadows Community College.

Tables are signed for representatives from a myriad of public agencies and media outlets.

Increasingly, those representatives are paying attention to the effects that a disaster would have on businesses in the region.

The command central room is the coordination point for all agencies in the region, says Aaron Kenneston, emergency manager at the Dardani facility. Its purpose, he says, is to plan and train, coordinate response, coordinate recovery and mitigate the disaster.

Washoe County also does outreach to surrounding counties as needed, through their IEPs — local emergency planning commissions. Fifty agencies are members.

The emergency management department also keeps people prepared through activities, such as September's QuakeSmart lunch, held in conjunction with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and chambers of commerce at which speakers detailed preparation for an earthquake.

Equally important is a series of free training sessions prepared for presentation through business groups such as chambers of commerce. The purpose, says Kenneston, is to set up a private sector council to be the voice of business to local government on emergency issues.

And to provide training for area businesses, the office of emergency management got a government grant to fund a program next year.

"History has shown we really need to watch industrial," Kenneston says. For instance, to keep items from falling on people, strap in tall shelves and especially industrial racking.

But it's uncommon to see such safety measures in evidence at the typical workplace. "It's hard to make an investment in disaster preparedness," says Kenneston. "It's not in the business budget."

—NNBW staff

Getting started on plan for business continuity after a disaster

The Washoe County Emergency Management and Homeland Security Office has prepared detailed information to help businesses and other organizations prepare a disaster plan. The plan is based on a document developed by the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York Inc.

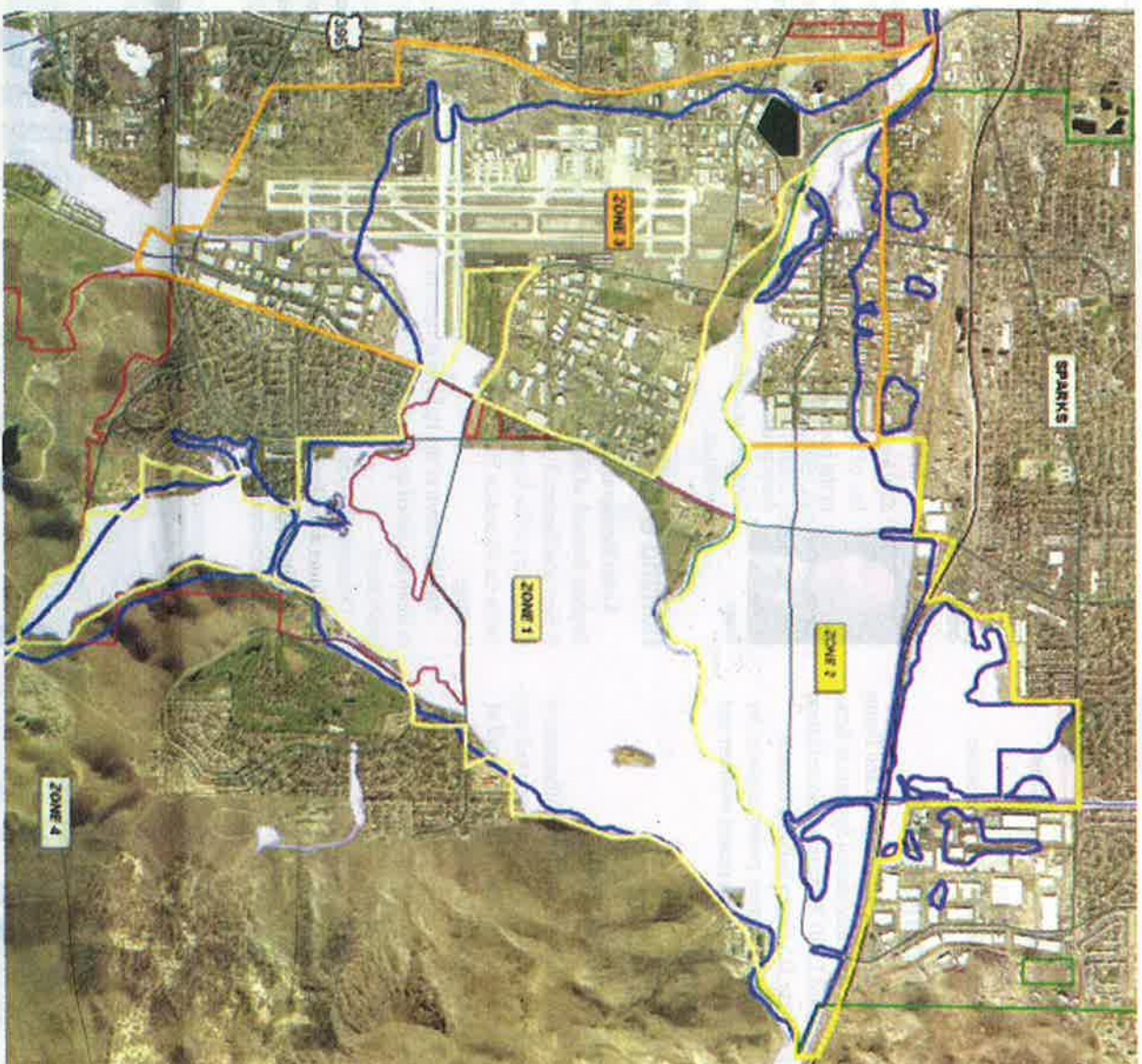
Here are some excerpts, and the full plan is available from the county office:

In creating a disaster plan, don't become overwhelmed by the tasks ahead. Work on it in sections, doing first the things that seem most important — e.g., personnel, computer/IT, etc. — and as time allows. The most important thing is to make some plans that can be implemented in the event of an interruption.

Assign a crew to complete the various sections, take a copy home ... store it on your intranet ... give copies to key personnel, including the board chair, the secretary or another appropriate board member.

What a disaster recovery plan is — and why you should do one

Whatever one chooses to call it — disaster planning, emergency preparedness, or



Flooding is one of the disasters for which Reno and Sparks businesses need to prepare. This map illustrates the high-danger zones.

business continuity (and experts note that there are differences) — the goals are ultimately the same: to get an organization back up and running in the event of an interruption. The problem causing the interruption could be one computer crashing or an entire network crashing. Or it could be an electrical outage or the result of a terrorist activity. The goal is to have some contingency plans in the event of a problem. A disaster recovery plan exists to preserve the organization so that it can continue to offer its services.

Business continuity is disaster recovery. Lost revenue is a driving force in business continuity. The reason to do a recovery plan is essentially to keep the funding coming in and the services going, and the clients being served. The most difficult thing is getting started; the second most difficult task is keeping the plan current.

In the event of an emergency, all personnel should know what their roles are, and where they should go.

Staff has to know what to do. A disaster preparedness and recovery plan should include employee training. It should address general training for all employees, including:

- Individual roles and responsibilities

- Information about threats, hazards, and protective actions
- Notification, warning and communications procedures
- Means for locating family members
- Emergency response procedures
- Evacuation, shelter, and accountability procedures
- Location and use of common emergency equipment
- Emergency shutdown procedures

Build emergency preparedness into the culture of the organization. Orientation sessions for new employees should include an overview of the contents and a copy of the preparedness manual.

The Washoe County Emergency Management and Homeland Security Office has identified 13 major hazards in the region: earthquake, wildland fires, flooding, severe storms, hazardous materials spills, transportation accidents, civil disorder, terrorism/WMD, avalanche, energy emergency, drought, volcanic ash fall, and bio-agriculture and human infection.

There are, ultimately, only four different scenarios that you need to plan for, regardless of the catastrophe or interruption:

1. Only your local office in the building is unusable. For example, one or more offices in your space become temporarily unusable because of a flood. Some contents and material may be recoverable, some may not be.
2. The entire building is gone. For example, a fire destroys the structure and its contents.
3. A temporary disruption of services, such as an electricity outage.
4. An impact in the large geographic area, rendering the area uninhabitable for an unknown amount of time.

Assign a team — you can't create a plan alone

Who in the organization should be responsible for creating the plan?

Assign a team to help create the plan. While small organizations may be able to get by with one person doing the work, larger organizations will have to enlist the assistance of others, particularly in coordinating various departments to provide needed portions.

The plan needs to be specific as to what

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PREPARING FOR A DISASTER

For area hospitals, emergency preparedness is ongoing

Disaster preparedness planning is an ongoing activity at hospitals and other medical facilities in northern Nevada.

"For a hospital, preparedness for mass casualties is not unusual," says Don Butterfield, director of communications for Renown Health. "In a healthcare setting, we have to be prepared for anything."

For instance, hospital personnel join in when county emergency planners stage drills. A typical scenario: an airliner crash, resulting in scores of critically injured passengers.

These drills are even staffed with actors who play the role of patients.

"We go through it as if it's for real," says Butterfield. "All first responders enact these drills at least yearly."

More typically, however, in times of trouble injuries are caused by individual motor vehicle accidents, such as those that resulted from the 1994-95 snowstorm. Still, the hospital spokesman adds, when emergency rooms need to accept a steady stream of injuries, it's important to have top-notch communications in place.

Hospitals need to know how many patients are expected and their condition. And the Regional Medical Services Authority,

which operates the ambulance system in the region, might need to know the status of each area hospital's emergency room, and its ability to meet demand.

"Hospitals keep each other appraised of emergency room capacity," Butterfield says. Hospitals also need a communications plan in place as a way to reach personnel who are off-shift, but now need to come in.

Meanwhile, the public needs to know how to reach hospitals to inquire about loved ones.

In a true disaster, a life and death situation, hospitals will activate their emergency command centers, complete with commander

in chief. At Renown, for instance, the incident command center is a designated room centrally located within the hospital.

The command center is equipped with locked closets stocked with all the necessary equipment.

And after a mock disaster drill — as well as after a mass casualty incident such as the Mitropah Hotel fire in downtown Reno — committee members hold a debriefing to discuss what went well and determine ways to improve emergency operations that proved difficult.

—NNBW staff

Consider installation of a generator for emergency power

Power outages are commonplace during disasters, and they may last for several days.

As a result, even businesses that are not severely damaged can suffer losses because of the interruption of normal operations or the loss of perishable stock. You can reduce these losses and speed the recovery process by installing an emergency generator. First, determine which systems and equipment are essential to the continued operation of your business. They may include one or more of the following:

- Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems
- Industrial equipment and major appliances, such as refrigerators and freezers
- Lights (interior and exterior), computers, and other office equipment
- Pumps, including sump pumps, sprinkler system pumps, and well water pumps
- Alarm systems

Once you have identified the essential systems and equipment, determine how much power they require. Then check with a generator sales representative regarding the appropriate size and type of generator.

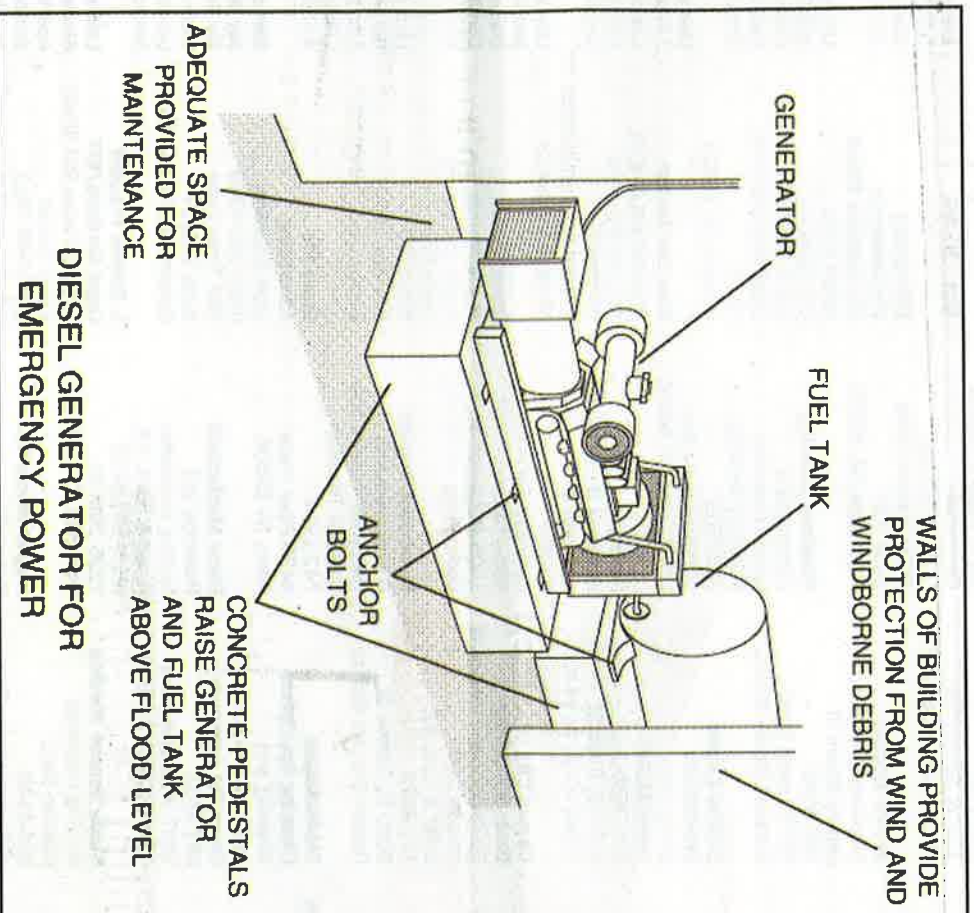
The sales representative can also help you select other components of the emergency power system, including the main transfer switch and the electrical panel.

Benefits of using generators

- Helps to prevent the interruption of normal business operations
- Helps to prevent the loss of perishable stock
- Helps to speed the recovery process

Tips

Keep these points in mind when you



select and install a generator:

- Protect your generator and its fuel tank from flooding and high winds. In flood hazard areas, mount the generator and tank securely on concrete platforms, above the expected flood level. Install the generator and tank inside or next to a building or protective structure to shield them from wind and airborne debris.
- Electrical and fuel supply lines must also be protected. And remember that your generator must be accessible for maintenance and that exhaust gases must be routed to the outside if the generator is installed in an

Use a photo inventory to protect a firm's assets

If your plant flooded today, destroying everything on the ground floor, would you have adequate documentation for your insurance company?

Photographer Liz Stanley of Virtual Image Solutions, LLC asks that question when she's out seeking business for her archival photo business.

And when she goes on site to photograph equipment and supplies, companies sometimes take a second look at where they're storing flammable materials like chemicals and paint, Stanley says.

She points to the Fernley levee break earlier this year, which flooded hundreds of homes without warning.

An asset inventory can literally earn you thousands of dollars in legitimate reimbursements, says Stanley.

Here's how to prepare for an inventory:

- Research and organize items.
- Make a spreadsheet for every room in your business — and home office.
- Describe each object category in each box.
- List each item in their category with a detailed product description.
- Create columns for manufacturer, brand, serial number, purchase date, cash value, and replacement value.
- Research, appraise and document value of items.
- Take photos and link the digital thumbnails to each category by inserting them into your spreadsheet. (Information is at photoassetarchival.com)
- Save and store a digital copy offline.

—NNBW staff



Liz Stanley says photo inventories can prove critical.

enclosed area. Some systems and equipment may have to operate continuously (refrigerators for example), while others may be needed only during normal business hours (such as office equipment).

You will need more power to restart systems and equipment when the power falls than to continue operating them after startup. The generator you choose must be able to meet both of these needs.

(You can minimize the power requirements for startup by starting individual systems and equipment in sequence rather than all at once.)

Before you buy a generator, ask your utility company if it has regulations that govern the use of emergency power equipment. Also, the installation of the generator and all wiring, switches, and other electrical components must meet the requirements of your local electrical codes.

Be sure to maintain an adequate supply of fuel. Your sales representative should be able to tell you the generator's rate of fuel consumption at various power output levels.

Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for routine maintenance of your generator.

Estimated cost

The cost of a generator will depend on the types and amount of equipment and systems that need to be powered, the requirements of local codes and utility companies, and the type of generator you choose and its specifications (i.e., ampereage, voltage).

—NNBW staff