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Being prepared for a disaster

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For over 30 years, disaster recovery and, later, business continuity, have had as much allure for companies to pursue as life insurance has had for individuals. However, as much as we do not like to pay insurance premiums, we

always believe we are doing the right thing in protecting our loved ones. With regard to paying for disaster recovery and business continuity protection, we have to follow the same principles. Our businesses are vital and many people depend on them.

Business continuity protection is an absolute necessity for the businesses of today and organizations like the Association of Contingency Planners are leading this effort. The efforts of the ACP national organization, with a strong local chapter here in Philadelphia, are helping to reinforce the concepts that businesses -- and consequently all individuals -- need to be prepared.

The focus for business needs to be on key elements, such as power, communications access to primary and/or secondary facilities and alternate work areas. Companies need to adopt an all-hazards approach in their planning.

The statistics to support this philosophy are staggering. A Sumantec company, Veritas, recently conducted a survey and found that 38 percent of all companies still do not have a business continuity or disaster recovery plan of any kind. Of those that did have a plan, another 40 percent had no idea how long it would take to recover normal operations. It is

an accepted fact in the industry that almost half of all companies without a disaster recovery or business continuity plan, and who experience a disruptive event, will go out of business within two years.

Compliance needs have brought renewed interest to these issues. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, Sarbanes-Oxley and other regulations are encouraging organizations of all types and sizes to become more compliant. Companies can no longer beg forgiveness or plead ignorance to these regulations because of the many effective solutions that are available in the market today.

Companies should start with an operations analysis and risk assessment that can tell them where they stand and what they need to do. From there, a well-organized business continuity process can help companies build their disaster plans. That same process can help them conduct a business impact analysis, develop emergency plans, and facilitate plan testing and plan maintenance.

The Association of Contingency Planners conducts monthly meetings where companies exchange ideas and learn from one another. The ACP Liberty Valley Chapter's next meeting will be on March 8 and the agenda will be focused on a review of the City of Philadelphia Emergency Management Plan. For more details, please visit www.acpinternational.com/lv/.



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