

# Planning for disaster

What would be the impact on your business if your premises burnt down, or suffered long-term flooding, or if one night an articulated lorry ploughed into the front of the building? Would you or your employees know what to do to ensure that your business was able to continue, let alone survive?

Business Continuity Management is something that needs your serious attention.

There are several steps to continuity planning.

- ▶ Analyse the risks to your business. Where is the business vulnerable? What would be the effect on the service(s) you are scheduled to provide:
  - 1 in the first 24 hours
  - 2 in 24–48 hours
  - 3 within one week
  - 4 in one to two weeks
  - 5 in the longer term?
- ▶ Assess the risks. For each risk you identify you need to ask three simple questions.
  - 1 How likely is it to happen?
  - 2 What impact will it have on my practice and my business?
  - 3 What can I do to reduce the likelihood or the effect or to mitigate the risk entirely?
- ▶ Develop your business continuity strategy. You could:
  - 1 do nothing
  - 2 accept the risks, but make arrangements with other practices for help
  - 3 reduce the risks, but still make arrangements as above
  - 4 reduce the risks to the point where you do not need help.
- ▶ Develop your plan, which should contain these key areas:
  - 1 roles and responsibilities
  - 2 incident checklists for key employees

- 3 what must be done in the first hour
- 4 things that can wait
- 5 how often your plan will be reviewed.

You will need to build into your plan, additional information from outsiders such as:

- your landlord
- neighbouring practices and other businesses
- utility companies
- your insurance company
- suppliers
- the Local Authority Emergency Planning Officer
- emergency services.

Finally, you should test and rehearse your plan.

In the final analysis, your Business Continuity Plan has to address two issues: people and premises.

Writing your Business Continuity Plan is relatively straightforward. It will need to contain the following information:

- a list of all the people who have been given a copy of the plan
- an analysis of the impact in the first 24 hours, 24–48 hours, up to one week and beyond
- the resources needed for recovery in each of these timescales
- a list of priorities
- an emergency response checklist
- a list of key contacts and their contact details
- a log sheet to tick things off as they are done.

Don't keep all of the copies of the plan in the practice!

Planning for something that might never happen may seem like a pointless exercise, but if disaster does strike, being prepared for it means that the practice will recover much quicker than it otherwise would. You may think that your patients would 'bear with you' while you take ages to find somewhere suitable to treat them; the reality is that they may not want to wait that long.