

# Business Disaster Survival Kit

## First in the Nation

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**H**istorically, after a catastrophic event, many small businesses close their doors, never to re-open. It doesn't always take a direct hit to put them out of business. Widespread disruption of the elements of commerce will close businesses. Loss of customers, workers, suppliers, inventories, transportation assets, and power and water shutdowns can mean economic ruin.

Florida's Business Disaster Survival Kit, created last year, was developed by the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council supported by the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) under its Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation Program. It represents a giant stride forward in the

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quest to make the state's businesses more disaster resistant. The aim is to provide guidelines for businesses to use in developing plans to remain in operation after experiencing catastrophic storms, technical disasters, terrorism and other conceivable disruptions to normal commerce.

The kit initially was funded with \$50,000 from the Florida Emergency Management Trust Fund as a regional project. However, because of its potential importance to all of the businesses in the state, the DCA contributed an additional \$150,000 of its Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) initiative funds to support the planning and enhancement of the kit. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds the HMGP which is administered by the DCA.

The kit details measures that can be incorporated

into a company's own preparedness plan. The measures include steps to:

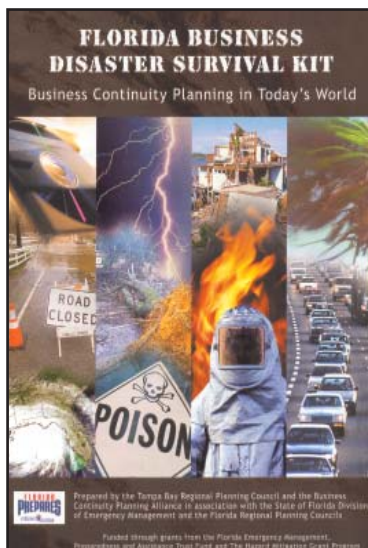
- minimize damages and losses of business property
- promote employee safety
- conserve resources
- survive and recover.



*The Tampa Bay Committee was tasked with development of the Small Business Disaster Survival Kit. Jerry Bock, a project team member from the private sector, shows the DVD version of the kit.*

The kit is an innovative approach to organizing a business plan for future disaster preparedness and response. It represents a giant stride forward in the effort to make the state more disaster resistant. It provides planning strategies to

mitigate the impacts of natural and environmental hazards, drought, famine, agricultural diseases, pests and other disruptions to business. Also provided is an in-depth guide that takes a company through the steps and actions needed to strengthen its chances of survival following an event. Accidents are difficult to anticipate, but detailed



advance planning can minimize environmental impact.

Businesses can easily assess vulnerability to losses from a potential disaster with the tools provided by the Business Disaster Survival Kit. Owners and managers answer a short questionnaire that results in an overview of

how their business may respond to a potential disaster.

The time immediately following a catastrophic event is most significant. Having a disaster response plan in place, coupled with worker participation in implementation drills, will facilitate proper response under disaster conditions and maximize worker safety. Planning helps insure that necessary recovery resources are in place. In most cases, preparedness elements are simple and cost-free. They incorporate procedures that are closely aligned with existing daily routines but can effectively minimize inventory damages and business property losses

“It’s a fact of life about disasters that conditions can never be returned to a pre-disaster state,” says Jerry Bock, a business continuity planning coordinator assigned to the project. He adds, “A thorough knowledge of inventory, suppliers, storage and personnel strength, coupled with a pre-determined course of action, can increase a businesses’ chance for post event success.”

And, this can be very good for the community’s overall recovery. When a business survives a disaster and resumes operations as quickly as possible, the results are a minimum loss of local employment, a continuing contribution to the local economy and a stable tax base.

The Florida Business Disaster Survival Kit has the potential to become the model on which other states pattern their own business disaster survival plan. When the kit first appeared on the Web site, calls and other inquiries from as far away as Texas, Utah, and Washington State were received. For more information, go online to [www.fldisasterkit.com](http://www.fldisasterkit.com).