



8 steps to developing an effective contingency plan

You know the devastating effects a natural disaster or equipment failure can have on your business. You understand the risk you take by not making preparations for an unexpected event. And, you're convinced of the benefits of contingency planning. But how do you put a plan together, what should you include and where do you start? Following are steps your business can take to evaluate, analyze, create and implement a contingency plan that meets your specific needs:



1. **Gather and document key information.** The first step is to collect as much information as possible about your building and its current HVAC system. It is also a good time to make some notes about factors that could affect any temporary equipment you might require in an emergency. What are the design specifications of your building, are climate conditions a factor, are you planning any building alterations in the near future, and do you have any special challenges or concerns that need to be addressed?
 2. **Assess your level of risk.** Identify potential causes of system failure including natural disasters, power outages, equipment failures or even sabotage. Rank these causes based on their probability, potential to disrupt normal operations, and financial cost.
 3. **Identify your business priorities.** By taking your business priorities into account, the contingency plan can focus on areas within the facility that would have the greatest impact on mission-essential operations should an unplanned service interruption occur.
 4. **Perform a critical equipment audit.** Determine essential power and HVAC systems that have the greatest impact on operations, assess their current operating condition, document potential failure points, and identify where temporary heating and cooling capabilities might be needed to ensure continuous HVAC operation during various types of emergencies.
-

-
5. **Analyze financial impact.** Analyze the financial impact of a disruption in power or HVAC service. Experienced contingency service providers can help organizations estimate the true cost of unplanned downtime, which go far beyond the dollars needed to repair equipment. The full range of direct and indirect costs might also include lost goods or inventory, reduced worker productivity, diminished levels of service, lost customers, reduced revenue from being out of commission for days or even weeks, and missed business opportunities.
 6. **Draft the plan.** Now that you have assessed your risks, analyzed the financial impact of a disaster, completed an equipment audit and prioritized your critical business operations, it's time to put it all together into a written plan. Third-party contingency planning consultants and temporary equipment providers can help you put your power and HVAC contingency plan together using proven tools to ensure that the organization develops a complete, effective and useful contingency plan. You'll want to be sure the plan includes not only the actions to be taken, but also the assigned roles and responsibilities. Once finalized, and shared with the appropriate individuals, training should be provided and drills conducted to verify the process, identify areas for improvement, and make adjustments if necessary. For easy implementation in the event of an emergency, the plan should include a quick-look summary report, which outlines requirements, actions that need to be taken, individuals involved in the process and associated costs.
 7. **Making advanced preparations.** If temporary rental equipment is part of the plan, now is the time to find the best place to position the equipment onsite, and knowing in advance how the equipment will be connected to the building will save time and headaches. Identify the potential challenges of installing temporary equipment, prepare connection points in advance and arrange for any required permits. It is important to evaluate the building's water, piping and electrical systems to determine whether they are sufficient to operate temporary equipment. Having water and electrical infrastructure in place expedites the installation of a temporary chilled water system or supplementary HVAC unit, and can help reduce downtime from several days to several hours.
 8. **Keep it up to date.** Once completed, don't place your power and HVAC contingency plan on the shelf to collect dust. It should be reviewed and updated each year, or whenever there is a significant change in the facility, such as a building modification or expansion, so you'll always be prepared for the unexpected.
-