



# Is Your Business Prepared for a Future Crisis?

Each year, we experience a hurricane season. While some parts of the country may not be directly affected by hurricanes, they might be affected by other natural disasters such as tornadoes or earth quakes. Or there could be an active shooter or hostage situation. Whatever the emergency, businesses know there's potential they could be affected; thus they have a preparedness and recovery plan in place.

But what about the not-so-common crisis such as 9/11 or a global pandemic? How does a business prepare for something unexpected and unpredictable? The short answer is, **“update your business continuity and crisis management plans now.”**

### Start With Your Current Business Continuity Plan

It's faster to adapt an existing business continuity plan than to start a new one. You probably have the basics covered in your current plan, including an assessment of hurricane, flooding, and other natural disasters. (Are you in an area that has been hit by previous hurricanes, floods, or tornados? How likely is it that those events will happen again?) Your plan likely considers disease outbreaks, as well. If your business is located in a federal building or if your location has experienced civil unrest in the past, you have probably already assessed the likelihood of those threats. As well as documented your anticipated response and recovery as part of your plan.

Review and refresh your plan, as needed. This will ensure that your plan considers your people, company space and physical assets, communications and business systems, and



customer service. This handy [toolkit](#) is a hurricane preparedness plan for businesses from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Ready.gov also has excellent [business continuity planning resources](#) for businesses.

### Refresh Your Plan to Reflect Today's Reality

COVID-19 has turned so many businesses upside down! Are your products and services more (or less) in demand now that COVID-19 has emerged? Do you have employees suddenly working from home, effectively diffusing the geographic footprint of your business? Are you managing an office space with restrictions on how many people can be there at one time? And requirements for extra cleaning and sanitation?

Our country is also experiencing widespread civil unrest, with local protests that can disrupt businesses. As well as sporadic violence that has put residents in harm's way. Even if your employees are not actively involved in any of the demonstrations, the national diversity, equity and inclusion conversation is drumming up emotions and urges that can complicate a disaster response for a workforce that's already feeling vulnerable, uncertain, or simply tired.

Think through the new realities of your business. Consider where your people are and how you need to support them. Are certain key employees working remotely from areas that are more susceptible to hurricanes, potential power outages, flooding, etc? In what ways has civil unrest touched your workforce? How well is your organization responding to disruptions? What else might employees need to ensure their safety and wellbeing?

Assess what customers expect of you now. Then, update your business continuity plan to support continued operations – or a fast recovery – should COVID-19, a hurricane, flooding, civil unrest, or violent protests directly impact your business community. You may need to order extra supplies to ensure that you have what you need if your supply chain is impacted by a disruption. Or shore up your communications and infrastructure to support employees and customers whose essential connectivity may become compromised.

## Prepare Your Workforce

An effective business continuity plan is as much about people as operations. If a natural disaster, flu outbreak, or other potential danger is forecast to hit your area, start preparing early. Communicate with employees early. Be sure they are aware of your business continuity plan and how they should respond. Direct them to local news outlets and emergency response authorities for specific instructions in their communities. For example, COVID-19 has changed the availability and [best practices of public disaster shelters](#). People with underlying health conditions may opt to shelter with friends/family outside of the area if they must evacuate.

Many of our clients use their Avilar [WebMentor Skills](#)™ competency management system to prepare and respond in an emergency. Asking employees to complete an

online [skills assessment](#) can give you an up-to-date view of which employees have skills that may be needed for a response. A current workforce skills inventory can help you identify employees who have the skills to step in if some employees are temporarily unable to work. You can even use the system for [wellness check-ins](#), so employees can provide a quick daily update confirming they're okay.

Be sure you work out in advance how to stay in touch with employees if their workplace is compromised by weather, disease, or social upheaval. You wouldn't want employees to return until you had the "all clear" for them to return safely.

## Free Resources

To learn more about the novel coronavirus and dealing with a pandemic, we invite you to [view these free video training courses](#).

Courses provided as a public service by our content partners ej4 and Vado. For tips on creating a competency management plan for business continuity, read our white paper – [Before Disaster Strikes: Building Your Crisis Management Plan from your Skills Inventory](#). Or [contact us](#) to find out how Avilar's WebMentor Skills™ can support your team.

## About Avilar

Avilar – The Competency Company™ is a leader in web-based competency management and learning solutions for corporations, government, and non-profit organizations. Formed in 1997, Avilar was a pioneer with its award-winning WebMentor™ product line and has built itself on the basis of superior customer service and highly adaptable product design.

Avilar consultants are recognized as industry thought leaders and have decades of experience in implementation and analysis. Let Avilar help you transform your organization from ordinary to extraordinary.