

Forming Disaster Recovery and Emergency Response Teams: Team Duties and Responsibilities



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In any disaster scenario, the coordination, communication, and cooperation of all teams involved is crucial. Learn the techniques the pros use in this article by Leo Wrobel

Last month we took our first shot at establishing effective Disaster Recovery and Response teams. In that first of this three-article series, we asked you to note that you may actually be operating in two, three, or even four different locations after a disaster.

Some teams are required to coordinate restoration of damaged equipment and infrastructure at the damaged facility. Others might be required to set up a new alternate work location across town or across the country to conduct business until the original facility is restored.

A third set of teams will probably have to support the Executive Management Team (EMT) administratively in the processing of incoming reports as well as in the general dissemination of information to subordinate teams.

All this means is that more teams, each with unique responsibilities and needs in disaster, might be necessary than you first thought.

This month we will discuss the individual responsibilities of the subordinate teams and how they interface with the EMT in the recovery process. Depending on the size and complexity of your plan you might not use *all* these teams, but these examples should get the thought process rolling on how to set recovery goals and delegate responsibility in a disaster.

Executive Management Team

Consider the following diagram of an Executive Management Team (EMT), shown in [Figure 1](#).



[Figure 1](#) Executive Management team

Central Support Team (Proceeds to the EMT Headquarters)

This team ensures that adequate space and facilities are provided for the EMT and also assists in setting up and conducting an initial briefing with EMT assigned personnel.

It is necessary to conduct an initial briefing so that the EMT can make command decisions based on substantiated facts. After this initial briefing, the Central Support Team (CST) reviews incoming status, reports on the condition of

the facility, filters this information, and passes relevant information to the EMT. The CST also coordinates with the Affected Site Team (AST) on all AST team status reports and restoration recommendations. In addition to first line support to the EMT, CST duties can include the following:

- Alert the major vendors regarding the situation and requesting their assistance.
- Provide the vendor names to the AST leader so temporary passes can be issued to help control site access.
- Distribute copies of the Recovery Plan or inventory lists to the appropriate recovery function leaders for damage assessment and salvage activities.
- Request assistance from the utility companies to restore services if required.
- Direct and/or coordinate recovery personnel to travel to the disaster site and initiate facility damage assessment activities.
- Activate an equipment/media retrieval function and direct recovery personnel to travel to the disaster site to initiate salvage activities.
- Process appropriate approvals and coordinate the ordering of replacement equipment based on reports from the AST, including the following:

Document lists of ordered equipment.

Designate space for delivery, acceptance, and temporary storage of new equipment along with procedures to manage the delivery, receipt, and storage of equipment. Keep accurate records of equipment ordered and received.

- Serve as chief liaison between the EMT and all departments, contractors, vendors, insurance companies, clean up companies, and media.
- Monitor all other facility construction, repair, and restoration; and regularly brief the EMT about the status of those efforts.

Affected Site Team (Proceeds to the Damaged or Affected Site)

The AST reports immediately to the damaged site to direct initial assessment activities, including but not limited to the following:

- Alert staff support department management.
- Obtain clearance to send personnel into the affected building. Remember, depending on the nature of the disaster, someone else might be in charge of your building or your own facilities department, a landlord, or the fire department. It is not automatic that you can go right in.
- Direct overall recovery operations at the affected facility, including initial damage assessments to determine the extent of damage to the following:

Equipment rooms (computers, voice and data communications)

Data and magnetic media

Documentation (paper)

Forms

Other

- Determine salvageable status with vendors (for example, BMS Catastrophe or SERVPRO) that have been called in by the EMT or CST.
- Coordinate receipt of replacement equipment and material as ordered by the EMT and CST.
- Coordinate the installation and testing of said equipment.
- Maintain written documentation of changes and modifications.
- Accumulate daily written recovery status reports from the assigned subordinate team leaders; prepare an overall report and forward to the CST and EMT.

Determining the Need for Additional Teams

Recall the table from last month (shown below). Each department, depending on the size and scope of the disaster,

may have a role in the recovery effort. If you do not have a formal team, consider the need for the functions described below as they relate to your organization

Suggestions for Teams

If need be, some teams can perform double duty. For example, Risk Management can be combined with Internal Audit or Finance; or there could be a Risk, Audit, and Finance team

Since no two organizations are exactly alike, it is natural that no two recovery plans are exactly alike. Find out what is right for your organization and then assign responsible teams accordingly. Once you have decided on how to break up the tasks, and what teams you will use, the information that follows in the chart below might assist you in the thought process of what function each team might undertake

Support Function	Recovery Headquarters	Affected Site
EMPLOYEE RELATIONS	X	
FACILITIES	X	X
FINANCE	X	
RISK MANAGEMENT	X	
INTERNAL AUDIT	X	
LABOR RELATIONS	X	
LEGAL	X	
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	X	X
OFFICE SERVICES		
MAIL SERVICES	X	

SECURITY	X	X
SHIPPING & RECEIVING	X	X
MEDICAL	X	X
PUBLIC AFFAIRS	X	X
PURCHASING	X	
TRANSPORTATION	X	

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Equipment Recovery Team (Proceeds to Affected Site)

Duties can include the following

- Determine extent of equipment damage and determine needs for ordering equipment
- Make initial report upstream to the EMT as soon as possible
- Repair and replace of damaged equipment.
- Monitor equipment room and related infrastructure restoration
- Maintain interface with vendors
- Coordinate as required (and directed) with other associated teams

Facilities

Risk Management

Transportation

Purchasing

Security

Legal

- Monitor document recovery efforts for subsequent EMT reports
- Evaluate salvageable status
- Coordinate moving and storage of salvageable items with Equipment Installation Tear Leader at backup site (see below).

Equipment Installation Team Leader (Proceeds to Backup Site)

Duties can include the following

- Report immediately to computer recovery facility such as Sungard or IBN
- Make initial report to EMT
- Activate restoration functions as required
- Contact vendors and request an on-site representative
- Document and log recovery efforts for subsequent EMT reports.
- Coordinate move of salvageable equipment to backup facility
- Determine need to order equipment and make request through EMT
- Coordinate installation and testing of equipment

Systems Software and Data Retrieval Team

Duties can include the following

- Provide file names and description to the off-site storage companies and request retrieval from the alternate site.
- Verify that the data and items retrieved are correct
- Make initial report of progress to EMT
- Arrange to have documentation copied, allowing one set to be returned to an off-site storage.
- Alert software vendors, if necessary, and request any required vendor support
- Travel to backup center and reload all required disk data using available backup
- Verify that data is properly loaded
- Bring up and test the network systems software
- Provide subsequent EMT reports, including an estimate of when systems and software configuration will be ready for recovery operations
- Assist with problem resolution, installation of resolutions, or fixes

Additional Teams to Consider (Exercise!)

At this point I am sure you have the idea, even though I haven't included every particular team might do. Try the following as an exercise of how well you understand the concept

Take each function below, read the tasks assigned, and then (based on your unique organization) fill in the blanks with more information on what else you might expect that particular team to do

Human Resources

1. Provide a representative at Recovery Headquarters to notify families of injured personnel; explain benefits programs such as medical insurance coverage; answer questions about payroll continuation, employment, or securing temporary personnel during the recovery operation
2. _____
3. _____

Facilities

Provide a representative at Recovery Headquarters to offer guidance to local authorities accessing the damages facility. (This might include unique preventative measures such as automatic lock on doors, card key entry, alarms and so on). Assist in the assessment of building damage, particularly in terms of the following:

1. Architectural
2. Electrical
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Finance

Provide a representative at Recovery Headquarters to alert appropriate corporate financial departments to provide the following:

1. Immediate emergency credit arrangements
2. Petty cash
3. Travel advances
4. _____
5. _____

Insurance or Risk Management

1. Provide a representative at Recovery Headquarters to notify the appropriate insurance companies, get hold of "Proof of Loss" documentation instructions (for instance, whether photographs or video are needed), and obtain claims-filing instructions. Provide the proper handling of workers' compensation claims.
2. _____
3. _____

Internal Audit

1. Provide a representative at Recovery Headquarters to assist in investigation of cause during the recovery.
2. Monitor computer processing of applications if processing must be performed with "out-of-balance" conditions.
3. Verify that controls are in place for applications modified to meet limited resources available at the computer backup site.
4. Notify external auditors, if necessary
5. _____
6. _____

Legal

1. Provide a representative at Recovery Headquarters to handle legal issues with "next of kin."
2. Coordinate with local hospitals for additional medical requirements. Identify fatalities, locate injured personnel already moved to the hospital, and contact families
3. Advise recovery personnel on contractual obligations
4. Provide copies of any necessary contracts or agreements destroyed by the disaster
5. _____
6. _____

Medical

1. Provide representatives at Recovery Headquarters and the damaged site to handle minor medical requests.
2. _____
3. _____

Security

1. Provide security at all recovery operation locations
2. _____
3. _____

Mail Services, Shipping and Receiving

1. Provide representatives at Recovery Headquarters and other locations
2. Alert the Post Office about the situation
3. Establish mail services area within the Recovery Headquarters to handle mail for recovery personnel and express shipping functions at RHQ and other locations
4. Establish areas at all locations to accept deliveries 24 hours per day, verify and maintain all receipts and paperwork, develop control for further movement of all materials, and maintain record of all special charges.
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Public Relations

1. Provide a representative at Recovery Headquarters and the affected site

2. Coordinate radio and/or TV announcements to notify employees whether and/or where to report to work.
3. Prepare official company statement to minimize adverse publicity. Direct press conferences.
4. _____
5. _____

Transportation

1. Provide ground transportation (trucks, station wagons, and so on) to retrieve backup files, documentation, forms, and supplies.
2. Transport salvageable equipment and materials
3. Transport supplies to backup site.
4. Transport personnel and obtain hotel accommodations
5. _____
6. _____

Summary

I hope this information was useful to you in understanding the teaming concept in disaster recovery.

Next month we will cover one final essential ingredient in any successful recovery plan: the ability to mobilize these teams through effective "first alert" procedures.

To state it another way, you can have the most elegant plan in the world, but it matters little if you cannot contact or coordinate the people who will be involved in it.

You will learn about some specific techniques and technologies to help you in the conclusion of this series. Until then, stay safe and alert!
