



**Small Business Development Center
at Volunteer State Community College**

A public service program of the Division of Continuing Education & Economic Development

May's Newsletter:

**How to Get Your Business Back on Track after a
Disaster**

We have definitely had our share of disasters in the Middle Tennessee area over the last few years (tornadoes, ice, drought, flood, etc.). Some of you may even be experts at getting your business back up and running. For those who are new to this, there are a million things running through your mind as you try to decide what to do next. There is no doubt that the next several weeks will be hectic. So the question; where do you begin?

The first thing you have to decide is "*what does it take to make my business run*". What are the items you cannot do without? I have identified a list of these "must haves" for most small businesses:

Insurance:

- Your insurance agent will be a busy person for the next several weeks, so do not delay contacting them to inform them of what damages you have. Don't assume that everything will be covered and make sure to document all of your losses.

Property:

- Make sure your facility is safe and free of water and debris before returning.
- Find an alternate worksite from which you can conduct business

- If necessary, allow employees to work from home for a period of time. Yes, they may be more distracted at home, but if your workplace is not safe, it is the lesser of two evils.

Records:

- If you have water damage to your computer or laptop, you need to get your hands on another one as soon as possible. You will want to install your programs that you used to run your business, whether that is QuickBooks, Microsoft Outlook, spreadsheets, or any other contact management or industry specific software that you utilized. Once you do that, you can restore your backed up data (this is assuming that you backed up your computer files to something that wasn't washed away) and get started.
- Gather all of your paper files, wet or not, and identify the processes that may be documented for operating your business from contacting clients, to tracking finances, to distributing your product or service.

Customers:

- Communicate to key customers that you are still operating.
- Use this time to also check on your customers and identify ways that you can support them through this process.
- This will be a difficult time for you financially, but if you carry an Accounts Receivable, you may want to work with several of your customers on payment plans, during this recovery period.

Equipment and inventory:

- Gather any lists of equipment and inventory that is on hand and check for any "unaccounted for" items.
- Order or even borrow any items that you need to operate your business, such as computers, inventory, vehicles, manufacturing, etc.

Employees:

- Locate your employees and make sure that they and their families are okay. If necessary, try to assist them in finding medical care, housing, food, and other necessities before bringing them back to work.
- If all employees are unable to return to work, make sure that you have identified the critical tasks necessary to operate your business and delegate them.
- You may need to modify office rules and procedures for a period of time. Dress codes, rules about children in the office, and restrictions on using telephones for personal business for example, may need to be temporarily disbanded during this recovery period.
- Make sure your employees are ready to come back to work. Exhaustion and lack of sleep can decrease alertness, impair judgment, and make people more vulnerable to accidents and mistakes.

Suppliers:

- Gather a list of all your suppliers. If they are local, they may have the same issues that you are dealing with now, and you may need to make alternate plans for supplies.
- If you are having trouble collecting Accounts Receivable during this period.

you may ask your suppliers to work with you on payment plans as well.

With questions regarding SBA Disaster Loans you should visit:
<http://www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance/index.html>. Generally, SBA Disaster Loans are loans that are made available to help you cover losses that insurance does not cover.