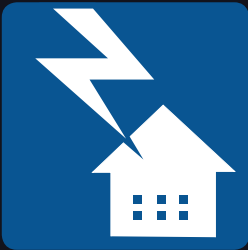
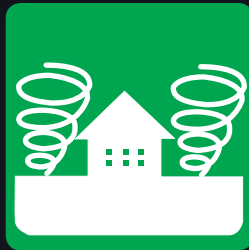




STAFFED OR STUFFED



Creating
Resilience
Through
Your People



Resilient
ORGANISATIONS 

A PRACTICAL GUIDE
FOR ORGANISATIONS

WHY A 'PEOPLE FIRST' APPROACH PAYS DIVIDENDS

- When disaster strikes, you will need your staff to go the extra mile.
- Research shows that organisations with committed, motivated and loyal staff are far more likely to survive and emerge stronger following a disaster.
- Your staff will only stand by you and your business if they feel that you support them.
- This is a 'how-to' guide for supporting your people in a disaster to ensure they perform at their best, so that your business survives.



LOOKING AFTER YOUR STAFF IN A MAJOR DISASTER

A guide for organisations
supporting their people.



Did you know?

- Organisations that plan and are proactive in ensuring the wellbeing of their staff are more likely to survive, and to recover faster from disaster.
 - Working with employees as they adjust their lives following a disaster will increase their commitment. This will in turn help the organisation's performance.
-

**EARTHQUAKES, TSUNAMIS,
VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS, MAJOR
FLOODING, AND MORE.**

**MANAGING IN DISASTERS IS ABOUT
PROTECTING YOUR PEOPLE AND
YOUR BUSINESS. THE MORE YOU
SUPPORT YOUR STAFF, THE QUICKER
YOU CAN GET YOUR BUSINESS UP
AND RUNNING AGAIN.**



Inside this Guide

There are several different stages you will encounter in a major disaster or crisis. This booklet covers three stages, and an ongoing theme.

The topics are:

1

Planning for your people (before disaster strikes)

- Preparing for disasters increases the likelihood that you, your staff, and your business will get through.

2

Responding to the situation (after disaster strikes)

- How to support your staff so they can support your business.

3

Rebuilding a better future

- Continue to move forward with your staff to build a better, stronger business.

+

Leadership is essential in **ALL** stages of a disaster.

**A RECURRING THEME IS
COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE,
COMMUNICATE. TALK TO YOUR
STAFF, AND LISTEN TO THEM.**

Planning for Your People

What is the plan?

This will be your 'how-to' guide when disaster strikes. It will tell you and your staff what to do.

1

Where to start? – Start with the basics first.

- **What's relevant to you?** – Your business' location will determine what sort of disasters are more likely to affect you, like flooding in low level areas.
- **What do your staff know?** – Can your team tell you what they would need to do if a disaster occurred? Test them to assess.
- **What do you need to know?** – What would happen if your business stops working, for you, your staff and your customers? What do you need to address to keep it going?
- **Disaster Communications** – How will you check if staff are okay and tell them when they're needed for work? Maintain staff contact lists.
- **Planning sessions** – Have staff meetings to discuss what would happen in different types of disasters. Develop solutions together with your staff.

“When it struck, we had no idea what to do. Most of the guys just panicked, we had no idea where everyone was. It was a mess really.”

- Medium business employee



2

What if? – Asking questions can highlight where the business is most vulnerable to disaster.

- **Who is critical** – Who is critical to the business? What would happen if they stopped working tomorrow? Create a backup plan.
- **Timing** – Would a disaster at 9am or 9pm affect you differently? What would you need to do to respond? How could you contact staff?
- **Essential services** – If electricity, water or telecommunications are disrupted, how will you keep working and keep in touch with staff and customers?
- **Working off site** – Could staff work from home if they needed to? What would they need?
- **Employment agreements** – Will staff be paid if they can't work due to a disaster? Consider employment agreements and how these situations will be covered.
- **Who** – Allocate roles and responsibilities to staff. Make sure they know what is expected of them, and what to do.

3

Planning & Preparations – The plan is useless if people don't know about it, or don't use it.

- **Share it** – Make sure that all staff know the plan and are part of making it work. Review and discuss it regularly.
- **Develop it** – No plan is perfect, so consider testing it with drills and scenarios.
- **Drop it** – In a disaster, you may need to drop the plan and come up with new strategies, depending on the situation. Include this in planning exercises.
- **At home?** Are your staff prepared at home? Do they have emergency supplies?

Responding to the Situation

Assess the situation.

Disasters can be devastating for some people, while leaving others unaffected.

1

Being Flexible & Adaptable – Post disaster will be a challenging time for you and your staff. Work together and find ways of moving forward.

- **Changing staff needs** – Tangible assistance like food and water may be important at first, but later on, social and emotional support may be more useful.
- **Returning to work** – Some staff will want to keep working while others will need to work part time or take time out. Some people's workloads may increase while others get less work – monitor this and be ready to adjust workloads. Ensure that both you and your staff take time out to rest and recover.
- **Listen to suggestions** – Staff may provide ideas like sharing jobs or working from home. Be open to exploring ideas that work for everyone.
- **Give them control** – Allowing staff to share tasks, workloads and shape work around personal situations will help reduce stress and burnout.

- **“If someone’s home environment is disrupted then their work focus and work performance will suffer. You need to do what you can to help.”**

- Family business manager



2

How can you support your staff? – Do what you can. If you can't help directly, assist staff to access the support they need.

- **How's it going?** Check how staff and their families are coping and help if possible. Staff may initially say they're fine if they feel others are worse off.
- **Okay at first** – People who didn't initially ask for help may need it later on as they become stressed or exhausted dealing with the longer term effects of the disaster. Keep an eye on your staff's wellbeing.
- **Work tools** – Ensuring staff have the equipment, workspace and tools to do their jobs following a disaster will help reduce stress and frustration.
- **Group support** – When there is time, hold events for staff to catch up with each other. This will help relieve stress and boost morale.

3

Listening & Communication – Your staff will feel more secure if they know what is going on. Be open, honest and listen for feedback.

- **Business updates** – Provide regular updates like building safety reports, how the business is doing financially, or staffing decisions.
- **Assistance** – Discuss issues like what type of assistance is available through the business, how long it will continue, how to access other services and support in the community.
- **Staff needs** – Staff will have an ongoing need to maintain contact with friends, family and insurers while at work. Supporting this will help reduce stress.
- **Listening and Feedback** – Listen to staff feedback and their reactions to decisions. Observe their emotions and feelings then respond to feedback.



Rebuilding a Better Future

Recovering can be the toughest.

You will need to reflect back as well as looking ahead and moving forward.

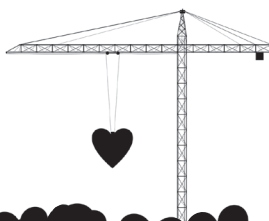
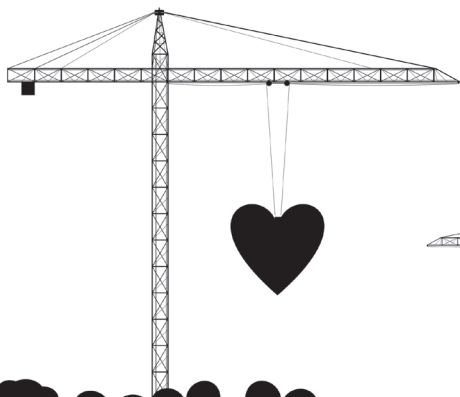
1

Lessons learnt – When the business starts to get back into a routine, think about what you and your staff have learnt.

- **Integrate lessons** – Did you create new ways of working during the disaster that worked well and could be integrated into everyday business?
- **For future disasters** – Review and identify what worked and what didn't. What would you do differently next time?
- **Record** – Document the systems you set up so that you could refer back to this in future.
- **Knowledge sharing** – As new staff join the organisation share your experiences, make them ready for disasters and involve them in the ongoing planning.

- **“We learnt a lot didn't we? We need to make sure that isn't wasted. I would never have believed I'd be capable of what I have achieved if I'd been told I'd be doing this six months ago.”**

**- Charity
organisation
manager**



2

Reflect & recognise – Your staff will have worked hard in difficult conditions. Show your appreciation.

- **Time out** – Take some time to acknowledge what staff have been through, and to share stories. It is an important part of moving on.
- **Acknowledgment** – Thank those who supported the business and their team mates. Show that their efforts are appreciated.
- **Have some fun** – Social events provide opportunities to thank staff and their families for supporting the business.
- **Keep them motivated** – Being staff-focussed will help ensure that your team stay motivated and continue to help support the business.

3

Support and the 'new normal' – The emotional stress can remain long after the business and city reopens.

- **Long term stress** – Some staff will face ongoing issues like insurance claims, while others will want to move on. Show patience and flexibility.
- **Work loads** – Staff will each recover at different rates. Can work be re-distributed to allow for staff who need more time out?
- **Work life balance** – Encourage staff to take time-off with friends and family as work returns to normal. This is important for stress recovery.
- **Respect** – For some staff, things will never be the same. Encourage mutual understanding and respect for those that have experienced traumatic events.
- **New environment** – Recognise that returning to business-as-usual may be unrealistic following a major disaster. Assess and adapt to the new environment.

Leading in Difficult Times

Actions and Words

Staff will be watching what you say and do. Make sure that your actions match your words.

1

Culture – Be a business that values the safety and well-being of its people.

- **Role model** – Show a constant interest and concern for your people. Encourage your staff to do the same for each other.
- **Get involved** – Take part in the disaster planning activities to encourage staff involvement.
- **Don't ignore it** – When you see a problem, make sure it's everyone's job to help fix it. Work together to build a better, safer business.
- **Be there** – Be on hand to chat with your staff and ask how they are. Just being 'around' shows that you care, and are involved.

2

Communicate, communicate, communicate – Talk with your staff regularly and be visible.

- **Be active** – You need to be constantly initiating communication. Don't just wait for staff to come to you. Show that you care.
- **Face to face** – Consider how you communicate with your staff. Face to face is often best, especially when issues affect staff personally.
- **Active listening** – Be open to suggestions and feedback. Are you seen as a person who will genuinely listen?
- **Through actions** – Don't just rely on words to communicate with staff. Lead by example to show the behaviours you want to see from them.

3

Be aware – The situation will constantly change. It's your job to keep pace!

- **Different needs** – Both you and your staff will have different needs that will change over time. Work with staff to find solutions that work for everyone.
- **Are you okay?** – Be aware of your own stress reactions and address them – buddy systems and time out can help. Be a role model for self-care.
- **Are they okay?** – Look out for signs that your staff are upset or distressed. Find out what's wrong and help as and where possible.
- **Leaving** – Some staff will want to resign or relocate following a disaster. Be constructive and work with them. They may wish to return later on.

4

Making decisions – How well you make decisions can make all the difference.

- **Staff first** – Your people should always be a top priority when making decisions.
- **Quick choices** – Decisions may need to be made quickly with little information. Update decisions as you learn more and receive feedback.
- **Get support** – Know when you need to ask for advice or help. Having experienced advisors you can call or talk to can be useful.
- **But why?** – Once a decision has been made, let your staff know. Explain why you made that choice. The WHY is critical to understanding.

“For our staff, the visibility of leadership was critical to feeling valued and being engaged.”

- Small business owner and manager



Building a Better Business

- 1 Working on how to protect your people and your business in a disaster is time well spent.** It will help to protect you in a disaster AND it will improve your everyday business performance.
- 2 People prefer certainty and a sense of control.** Disasters make the world an uncertain place which can be stressful. Interacting and communicating with your staff is essential. Providing information about the business and asking people about their personal situations can help staff to cope.
- 3 Spending time on your staff, and their safety and well-being, is not an expense. It's an investment.**

For further information see the 'Shut Happens' booklet, as well as guidance for HR practitioners, in the Resources section at www.resorgs.org.nz.



**“It’s a pretty simple equation.
If you take care of your people,
they will take care of you.”**
– *Small business advisor and consultant*



This guide was developed by Resilient Organisations – a public good research programme based in New Zealand. We have been researching what makes organisations resilient to crises since 2004.

Resilient Organisations is a collaboration between top New Zealand research universities, particularly the University of Canterbury and University of Auckland. We are funded by the Natural Hazards Platform and supported by a diverse group of industry partners and advisors. We are a multi-disciplinary team of over 20 researchers, representing a synthesis of engineering, science and business leadership aimed at transforming organisations into those that both survive major events and thrive in the aftermath.

See www.resorgs.org.nz for further information

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ORGANISATIONS

A collaboration between research & industry

Walker, B., Fraser, M. & Nilakant, V. *Staffed or Stuffed*, Resilient Organisations Business Resource 2014/A, ISSN 2381-9790

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