

Incident vs. Disaster

By Skip Williams
July 19, 2010

Is the sky falling? Or are we over sensitive?

June 23rd 2010 is a date that for some will remain an important day, but for most of us, it was just another day. On this day, there was a 5.0 magnitude earthquake in the North East of North America. If you live in an area that experiences these types of tremors on a regular basis, you're probably giggling at the near hysterical response that did occur... If you live in the North East, you experienced a one in 500 year phenomena!

How does this relate to Business Continuity?

Was this an incident? Yes.

Or was it a disaster? Hardly.

Ottawa, the largest city in the center of the earthquake, suffered slight damage with some windows breaking and cracks in the foundation of some buildings. So, this would definitely class itself as an incident, not a disaster. However, the response from many of the residents and businesses was one of major catastrophe. Most building evacuated in downtown Ottawa, which is against the established steps of "Stop, drop, hold":

If you are indoors: "DROP, COVER, HOLD";

- Stay inside.

- **Drop** under heavy furniture such as a table, desk, bed or any solid furniture.

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- **Cover** your head and torso to prevent being hit by falling objects.

- **Hold** onto the object that you are under so that you remain covered.

How does this impact my Emergency Response Planning (Business Continuity, Disaster Recovery or COOP)?

All incidents are a chance to take and learn lessons – this is no different.

“Should we have an earthquake response in our plan?” This depends on the likelihood of another one coming. When you did your Threat Risk Analysis (TRA) you most likely looked at the statistics and considered the likelihood of an earthquake in your region. In the North East at least, the odds of having another earthquake of similar magnitude is less than 2% and according to Scientist John Adams, of the Geological Survey of Canada the earthquake would have to be at least 10 times stronger before any damage would occur to buildings, thus dropping the likelihood to almost zero.

So, to answer the above question of adding similar incidents to your response plans, if you live somewhere that has regular incidents (snow storms, flooding, wild fires, power failures), then yes add these to your response plan. If such occurrences are a one in 500 year incident, survive it, learn from it and be better prepared to ensure it remains an incident and doesn't turn into a disaster.

About KingsBridge

KingsBridge offers private businesses and government organizations a unique combination of industry knowledge and cost-effective disaster recovery / business continuity solutions. KingsBridge products and seminars provide the tools to assess possible threats and create tailored plans which mitigate risks and minimize losses in the event of a disruption to business. Kingsbridge is headquartered in Ogdensburg, New York, with offices in Ottawa, Canada and Burlington, Vermont. For more information visit us at www.DisasterRecovery.com

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