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The recent earthquake in Japan is another eye-opening reminder that we never know when or where a disaster may strike. Sure a tsunami is highly unlikely here, but smaller events, such as a fire, flood, or water leak, could happen anytime and cause extensive damage to your business. It is an unfortunate topic that no business owner wants to think about, but it can be an ugly reality without a disaster-preparedness plan. In fact, the Institute for Business and Home Safety estimates that 25% of companies don't reopen after a major disaster. According to the National Archives and Records Administration, 93% of companies that lost data for 10 days or more due to disaster filed for bankruptcy within one year. Don't let your business fall into these statistics! Prepare today!

So where should you start with your plan?

First, take a look at the back-up policy in your business. You should be doing the following in regards to data back-ups:

- Make it a standard practice to back up all vital company information. In the event of a disaster, all your files could be destroyed – would your company be able to survive without data? You'll need to establish a back-up frequency equivalent to how much data you can afford to lose. For example, if only one day, then daily back-ups need to be performed.
- Make sure all relevant information is being backed-up. Did you remember to back up your email and contacts, along with all of your documents? Did you back up Windows and all installed applications?
- Be sure your back-ups are stored off-site. If your data is in "the cloud" make sure your hosting provider performs back-ups as well.
- Compile all media software and license key records safely offsite.

Second, consider how you could work if your office building is not accessible. You need to be able to run your business without having to physically go to your office. Here are some options to consider:

- In addition to local, onsite data back-up, institute cloud back-up. This ensures data recovery is not tied to the availability of physical media.
- Include a Cloud Disaster Failover option. This pushes a full copy of your operational servers to the cloud, which can be brought online from cloud accessible locations.

Third, perform annual testing. Any solutions effectiveness is based on preparation in advance. You should conduct an annual disaster test in which the business is shut down to verify that all key components necessary to operate the business are accessible and functioning as planned.

Finally, call on the experts. When you want to make sure your business has taken the proper steps to remain strong after a disaster, call on an expert to assist. You may have questions about how to establish a centralized, automated backup system or if you have a back-up system in place, you may be curious to see if all the relevant data is being backed up properly.

At SSE, we can help uncover any gaps in your disaster-preparedness plan and make suggestions on steps you can take to ensure you are ready for whatever make strike when you least expect it. Take some time to prepare now and it can save you time, money, and possibly even your whole company in the future.

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