

## Recommendations for Business Disaster Aid Planners

- 1. Plan in advance, and incorporate community assistance into your company's plans.**  
Do not just focus on internal planning. No matter how much your company invests in shatter-resistant windows or provides emergency employee call lists, it can still be adversely affected by unexpected occurrences such as a tree blocking your facility's entrance, a need for volunteers to assist with emergency services, or school closures that require employees to stay home.
- 2. Communicate to fellow employees and key external stakeholders your company's plans, and practice the plans at least once.**  
Some employees may expect the company to respond immediately, and they may not be aware of how disruptive a disaster can be on the ground. There is always the risk of rumors, misinformation, and gaps in information at the beginning of disasters. It is important for people to understand that your company is participating in the disaster response process, even if it does not look like immediate action is being taken. People understand that disasters are unexpected and disruptive, but they will not know how your company is engaged if you do not tell them.
- 3. Let the authorities do their job and give them time to do it.**  
The federal authorities have experience, resources, and a mandate to respond to disasters. It may take some time for local authorities to reconstitute because they may be displaced, depending on the magnitude of the disaster. *Call BCLC at (202) 463-3133 if you have questions or need an update on the situation.*
- 4. Do not engage in unauthorized or uninvited aid campaigns, particularly in the first few days after a disaster.**  
Make it a policy to wait for an invitation either from a government agency or a reputable disaster aid service provider. Unaffiliated volunteers can engage in risky behavior because they may not be aware of all of the potential hazards, and unaffiliated aid can be counter-productive if not coordinated with federal plans.
- 5. Differentiate between making a pledge and making a commitment.**  
Your company can announce its pledge quickly, but this does not mean that all funds have to be committed to a single organization. Most companies make their pledges within six weeks after a disaster, but an increasing number of companies are finding it prudent to fulfill their commitments over a longer time span.

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6. **Consider allocating your company's contributions to relief, recovery, and reconstruction.**

Disaster assistance is not just about saving people's lives; it is about their living environments and livelihoods, as well. Most disaster aid efforts drop off the radar screen within six months after the disaster, but it can take as long as 25 years for some communities to fully recover.

7. **Do not fund post-disaster start-ups.**

Not all start-ups are bad, but they do not have experience with past disasters. They have high administrative costs associated with starting up, and they do not have a track record of performance. There is also the possibility of fraud and misrepresentation.

8. **Cash is king, but there is a place for products and services, too.**

According to BCLC statistics, about 25% of corporate contributions are products and services. Products and services must be appropriate to the region, so consult a professional product management service, such as Aidmatrix Foundation, before making a donation.

9. **Volunteers matter.**

Disasters displace people. Government officials, firefighters, care givers, teachers, clean-up crews, veterinarians, and other important personnel can all be unavailable to serve in a disaster's aftermath. Consult a professional volunteer management agency, such as Hands On Network or Points of Light Foundation, about how employees in your company can make a difference.

10. **Define your disaster aid goals.**

Think about what your company hopes to accomplish and what it can accomplish. In some cases, this may mean supporting a larger relief or reconstruction effort. In other cases, your company may be able to define a niche where it can add unique value. Whatever the case, track your company's contributions and demand accountability. People's lives, livelihoods, and communities are at stake.

11. **Count on the Business Civic Leadership Center for support.**

We have been working with businesses on disaster aid issues since 1998. For more information, visit our Web site at [www.uschamber.com/bclc](http://www.uschamber.com/bclc), or contact us at (202) 463-3133 or [BCLC@uschamber.com](mailto:BCLC@uschamber.com).