ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR DEPARTMENT CONTINUITY PLANNERS

A major storm, power failure, water main break, hazardous material exposure, structural failure or fire could damage buildings on campus, in some cases forcing closure for weeks or months, and will certainly interrupt the activities of those in the affected area. Department Continuity Planners (DCPs) and Department Continuity Planning Teams (if developed) have the responsibility of preparing for, responding to, and recovering from any event that affects the department’s ability to perform its mission. For more information on Business Continuity at Boston College, and to review the Ensuring Business Continuity University Police, visit www.bc.edu/emergency/businesscontinuity.

Departmental Continuity Planner

The Department Continuity Planner is responsible for developing, training, testing, updating and maintaining the departmental Business Continuity Plan. This is accomplished by assembling key staff and information that would be needed in an emergency situation affecting the department, including: identifying critical functions; assembling contact information for staff, vendors and customers; identifying key equipment, supplies and support needs; identifying alternate arrangements for working during a disruption and developing ways to communicate in an emergency.

The Department Continuity Planner reports to departmental management and works with the Boston College Emergency Management Executive Team (EMET) in a disaster situation to coordinate information and support from the University if needed.

In an Emergency

The Department Continuity Planner is responsible to ensure the following actions are assigned/completed:

- Notify Department Management, Continuity Team and Emergency Management of emergency situation and activate the Department Business Continuity Plan if needed
- Determine if the Department Operations Center (DOC) or conference call activation is required. If so, notify Department Management and the Continuity Team to report to the pre-defined location. Notify Emergency Management of the DOC location and contact information.
- Assess the estimated length of time of the disruption and report the assessment to Department Management, Continuity Team and Incident Commander at the University Emergency Operations Center (EOC) if necessary (St Clements Room 149).
- Review the scope of the problem, noting areas affected, probable duration, location to resume operations, numbers of users involved, plan for recovery, staff requirements and staff availability.
- Coordinate and communicate with the various continuity team members and the University EOC if additional resources are required. Establish a liaison with the Incident Commander if appropriate
- Coordinate the return of processing to the usual functional area, or to a new site, if necessary
- After the recovery effort, meet with the Department Continuity Team members. Analyze the recovery procedures, and make any necessary additions or modifications to this plan.

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Plan Updating and Distribution

To ensure that your plan remains current, schedule regular updates, conduct departmental and broader organizational tests, and train the personnel responsible for actual implementation of the plan. In addition, promote the plan to maintain and enhance awareness within the organization. Ensure the plan is updated at least annually or more often if major changes occur in the organization. After exercises or real world emergencies, even if they do not directly affect the department, are perfect opportunities to update the plan while items are still fresh in your head about what needs to be changed. Also, be sure to review items such as contact information on a quarterly basis as they can change regularly.

Ensure that the updated document is distributed to Department Continuity Team members, department management, and the Emergency Management Office, and placed in the shared online Business Continuity folder on Google Drive. A copy of the Department Plan should also be sent to an off-site storage location.

Test the Plan

At least annually conduct a test of your Plan. This could be a tabletop discussion where the Continuity Team or department walks through a scenario and uses the plan to inform how they would respond. The Planner could conduct a notification and communication exercise to test contact information, or staff could participate in a remote exercise to test the ability to access necessary documentation, procedures, programs, and files and other support services when their office is unavailable. Deficiencies in these exercises should be noted and incorporated into the plan. The Office of Emergency Management is happy to assist with the development and implementation of the exercise if departments need assistance. Result of the exercise should be sent to the Office of Emergency Management for inclusion in the annual Business Continuity Status Report for Senior Administration.

Mitigation Steps

Identify any deficiencies and/or vulnerabilities in your plan when updating, testing or reviewing the plan during an event. Discuss with the Continuity Team possible solutions to correct these gaps or ways to be better prepared for these issues and change or update the plan to correct these identified items. There is also a section of the plan dedicated to capturing mitigation steps that have been identified by the Continuity Team, but are unable to be implemented immediately due to costs, dependence on another entity, restrictions etc. This section is a dedicated place to capture these items for future improvements.

Train Personnel and Promote the Plan

Promoting the plan means keeping it viable and visible to all members of the department. Planners should conduct an orientation program for personnel on the Continuity Planning Team outlining the actions planned for response to and recovery from a disaster and semi-annual or quarterly briefings on planning status at departmental staff meetings. All staff should have some basic familiarity with this plan such as notification and communication strategy, meeting locations, critical functions, etc.

Remember; all staff should take preparedness to heart and take steps before an emergency to be ready in case of emergency. This should include personal and family preparedness at home including a family disaster and communication plan and a disaster supply kit. Further information and assistance can be found at www.bc.edu/emergency or by contacting the Office of Emergency Management at 617-552-4316.