



HOMELAND SECURITY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

Pandemic-Specific Continuity of Operations Planning Guide

3/5/2020

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Purpose

This is to assist **agencies, businesses, communities, and organizations** in creating a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) that addresses the specific needs of a pandemic-type event, who either; **do not have a current Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)**, or whose COOP **does not adequately address pandemic-type events**.

With a pandemic-type event, the need to activate a continuity plan will be **less of a sudden event**, and more a trickle of circumstances that can build up into an event. It can be more difficult to identify the start and stop points, and thus a pandemic-specific continuity plan can increase an entity's resilience, regardless of event severity. The primary factor at play is a reduction in workforce that has rippling effects throughout any entity.

A pandemic-type event can be **expected to have community impact for a 2-3 month window**.

This guide will orient you to potential pitfalls, and provides concrete steps to best protect your business operations in the event of a pandemic-type event. It is also of note that going through this process may increase your day-to-day operational resilience, and improve your normal business operations workflow. It is well worth the effort and resources.

Preparation Checklist

- Identify Exposure Mitigation Steps
- Identify Orders of Succession and Delegations of Authority
- Survey Employee Skills and Permissions for Cross-Training
- Identify Essential Functions
- Identify Essential Records
- Inventory of Critical Supplies
- Create a Communication Plan
- Identify Devolution Criteria
- Identify Reconstitution Criteria
- Train and Test Plan Effectiveness

Ongoing Continuity of Operations Checklist

- Continue to monitor up-to-date information from health officials, and travel alerts
- Maintain status awareness of Mission Essential Function, Supporting Essential Functions, Essential Records, and Communication Channels
- Make regular updates to internal and external audiences on: current status, current chain of command/organizational chart, and up-to-date information from health officials
- Monitor employees for all aspects of health, including both physical and mental health amidst an altered work load



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Identify Exposure Mitigation Steps

The following are areas and steps to be considered by leadership that can impede the spread of an infectious disease, and mitigate the impact on business operations.

☐ IN THE WORKPLACE

- **Are we encouraging hygiene?**
 - Through our policies and messaging? (handshaking, hand washing, etc.)
 - In our habits and examples? (handshaking, hand washing, etc.)
 - By providing supplies? (tissues, soap and water, sanitizer, etc.)
 - By maintaining a high standard of environmental cleanliness?
- **Can we better protect employees in the workplace?**
 - Through telework?
 - Through shift work to decrease interpersonal contact?
 - Through increasing physical distance between employees?
 - By evaluating gathering spaces, meetings, and events?
- **Are we supporting the personal, individual preparedness of our employees?**
 - Allowing time and resources for good hygiene practices at work?
 - Allowing time to gather essential resources for home and work needs?
 - Supporting alternate work plans for caregivers who may be needed?
 - Assisting in continuity planning for responsibilities outside of work?

☐ IN OUR WORK POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- **Have we assessed our work travel?**
 - Does it involve travel to a location of increased risk?
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>
 - Is it essential to our business operations?
 - Can it be postponed, or meetings done digitally?
 - Does the risk outweigh the reward?
 - Do the employees traveling have pre-existing conditions that would make them more susceptible to infection?
- **Do we need to make any changes to make telework more feasible?**
 - Do we have the right equipment?
 - Do we have adequate networks and connectivity?
 - Do our work processes support distributed work?
 - Does each employee have adequate access to systems?
- **Do our policies and expectations fit a pandemic-type situation?**
 - Reduced workload or work hours?
 - Increased stress levels and mental health support?



- Employees caring for family members?
- Employees that are first responders in their communities and may be called into duty?
- **Have we consulted with bargaining unit representatives?** (if applicable)
- **Have we clarified expectations** for reporting in and work completion?
- **Have we ensured continuity of understanding throughout management levels?**

□ **IN OUR SICK LEAVE POLICY**

- **What is our criteria for sick employees?**
 - CDC: “Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering.”
 - CDC: “Do not require a healthcare provider’s note for employees.”
- **What type and level of notification will we require from employees?**
- **Will we share this information with other employees for health monitoring?**
- **At what point will we send an employee home?**
- **Have we addressed when there are sick family members in their home?**
- **Should we consider a voluntary quarantine** for employees who have recently traveled to locations with elevated infection rates?
- **How will we support employees without sick leave time accrued, including part-time or hourly employees?**
- **If schools and childcare facilities close**, what support will we provide to parents?
- **Have we clarified expectations and criteria** for both staying home and returning to work?
- **Have we ensured continuity of understanding throughout management levels?**



Identify Orders of Succession and Delegations of Authority

Orders of Succession are used when a person is unable to do their duties for any reason, and another is designated to take their place and assume their role. There should be a written line of succession three people deep for each key role when possible.

Delegation of Authority is identifying who has the authority to take specific types of action, at what level, and under what conditions.

Instructions for Order of Succession

Identify the key leadership members of your agency/business/community/organization, and who would be the best replacement for them in the event that they are not available or incapacitated. In writing, specify the conditions for the Order of Succession to be activated, and limitations that should be placed, if any. Be conscious of creating too many cascading interdependencies, should multiple successions be necessary.

Orders of Succession - EXAMPLE		
Position	Designated Successor	Conditions or Limitations
CEO	COO	Until return or replacement of incumbent.
	CIO	
	CFO	
COO	CIO	Until return or replacement of incumbent.
	CFO	Not to exceed (time period)
	1 st Shift Leader	
CIO	CFO	Until return or replacement of incumbent.
	Senior IT Manager	Not to exceed (time period)
	IT Manager	
CFO	Senior Accountant	Until return or replacement of incumbent.
	Accountant	Not to exceed (time period)
	Senior HR Manager	



Instructions for Delegation of Authority

Identify the key permissions/abilities in your agency, business, community, or organization, and who would be the best replacement for them in the event that they are not available or incapacitated. Specify the conditions for the authority to be delegated, and limitations that should be placed, if any.

Delegation of Authority - EXAMPLE

Authority Type	Authority Holder	Delegated Authority	Conditions or Limitations
Contract Signature	CEO	COO	Until return or replacement of incumbent.
	CFO	CIO	
		Senior Accountant	
Hiring Temporary Employees	COO	CIO	Until return or replacement of incumbent.
		CFO	Not to exceed (time period)
		Senior HR Manager	
Travel Authorization	COO	CFO	Until return or replacement of incumbent.
		Senior Accountant	Not to exceed (time period)
		1 st Shift Leader	



Survey Employee Skills and Permissions for Cross-Training

In the event that key employees are not available, others will need to be able to perform functions in their stead at a base level to continue operations. It is important to **identify those staff members who may be able to fill in or assist in the completion of your essential services.**

Although employees may not currently be assigned to tasks related to the essential services, their previous work experience or particular skills sets may allow them to complete these functions. For each essential service, **create a list of all staff or other resources who could be cross-trained** to perform the required tasks.

- Who are the functional gatekeepers in our organization?**
 - Granting systems access?
 - Maintaining key systems?
 - Information keepers?
- What key functions need be cross-trained?**
 - Who is essential to our business process?
 - What skills are needed to continue the process?
 - What permissions or access would they need?
- What personal preparedness steps should employees take in advance?**
 - What resources would they need to be able to fill in?
 - What could be pre-staged or setup to better facilitate a transition?

Cross-Training Worksheet - EXAMPLE

Essential Skill or Access	Current Employees Trained/Available	Alternates	Action Steps to Cross-Train or Grant Access to Alternates
Loading Fuel to Delivery Trucks	Fred Smith Betty White	Jason Currier	Jason needs to complete safety course, Shayla needs a practice session
		Shayla Jones	
		Bob Reeves	
Opening Truck Yard	Fred Smith	Betty White	Go over procedures and make copies of keys
		Ryan Green	



Identify Essential Functions

Mission Essential Functions are those functions that enable an entity to:

- Provide vital services
- Exercise civil authority
- Maintain safety and well-being of the general populace
- Sustain the industrial and economic base

Supporting Essential Functions are the components of the Mission Essential Function, broken down into their own set of priorities.

Instructions for Mission Essential Function Worksheet

COLUMN 1: For your agency, business, community, or organization, what are the essential services that you provide? What are the base needs of your operation? What is most needed? What needs increase with a pandemic-type situation? What can be suspended?

COLUMN 2: What is the impact if the function is left undone? How are other operations affected? What is the business impact?

COLUMN 3: What interdependencies do you have with other entities? What do other entities rely on you for? Who do you rely on for information, services, or resources?

COLUMN 4: What physical resources are needed for this function? Supplies, equipment, tools, capabilities?

COLUMN 5: Estimate how not doing this function will impact your ability to operate, and assign a relative score of 0, 1, 2, or 3.

COLUMN 6: Estimate how difficult or costly it will be to reinstate this function, and assign a relative score of 0, 1, 2, or 3.

COLUMN 7: Multiply Column 5 and 6 – This is the overall priority level of this function.

This worksheet can be used by smaller entities to assess overall operations, or can be scaled to cover a larger entity by having each level/department conduct an assessment and report to organizational leadership for coordination.

Instructions for Mission Essential Function Worksheet

Repeat the same worksheet process to determine the Supporting Essential Functions. For each Mission Essential Function that has been designated a higher priority, chart what sub-functions are needed to action it – and prioritize accordingly.



Mission Essential Functions Worksheet EXAMPLE – Heating Fuel Business

Essential Function	Impact If Not Done	Partners	Resources Needed	Impact Score	Recovery Score	Priority Level
Deliver Home Heating Fuels	Customers running out of fuel, lost revenue	Fuel suppliers	Serviced trucks, fuel	3	2	6
Service Calls	Customer equipment fails, lost revenue	Parts suppliers	Service parts	3	2	6
Maintenance Calls	Will create a backlog of future calls, may lead to equipment failure, lost revenue	Parts suppliers	Service parts	2	2	4
New Tank Installation	Lost revenue, or backlog of future installations		Tanks, excavator	1	2	2
Rewards Program	Frustrated customers			1	1	1

Supporting Essential Functions Worksheet EXAMPLE – Delivering Home Heating Fuels

Essential Function	Impact If Not Done	Partners	Resources Needed	Impact Score	Recovery Score	Priority Level
Maintain heating fuel inventory	No fuel to sell	Fuel suppliers	Inventory system	3	3	9
Maintain delivery fleet	No delivery available	Local garage	Tracking system	3	2	6



Essential Functions Worksheet

Essential Function	Impact If Not Done	Partners	Resources Needed	Impact Score	Recovery Score	Priority Level



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Identify Essential Records

Essential Records are the information systems, applications, documents, references, and records needed to support the prioritized Essential Functions.

Essential Records Worksheet EXAMPLE – Delivering Home Heating Fuels

Essential Record	MEF Supported	Form of Record	Maintenance	Vendor	Backup Location
Fuel Inventory System	Deliver Fuel	Digital	Daily	Fueldashboard.com	none
Fleet Tracking System	Deliver Fuel	Hardcopy	Weekly	none	In each truck

After identifying essential records, determine:

- How will the records be accessed if the workforce is dispersed?
- Will they require updating? And how that will occur?
- Are there any potential document version control issues?
- How can records be backed up?
- If records are lost, how could they be recovered?
- Are there any security vulnerabilities to be considered?



Inventory of Critical Supplies

Organizations that depend on a supply chain may find themselves without the necessary materials, supplies, and workforce because other communities across the country or globe may still be affected by an outbreak. **Stocking supplies for the anticipated 8- to 12-week first wave is advisable.**

It is important to coordinate with suppliers ahead of time to ensure you can obtain essential items. Find out how they intend to support their customers and where they feel their “breaking points” are. Don’t accept explanations such as, “We don’t expect any disruptions.” Ask what their continuity plan is.

Ensure supplies are staged and available at each worksite. Staging may be complex, especially if your organization pursues a telework strategy. Build a “trigger” into the planning process so that essential personnel have a definite point at which they will need to get the supplies they need for an extended period away from the office. In addition, you may need to plan for security to protect your inventory.

- What services, systems, or equipment are required in order to provide essential services?
- Have your sources provided written assurances that they will be able to perform under pandemic conditions?
- What might you be able to substitute as temporary backups for preferred essential supplies or equipment?
- Have you considered partnering with another organization in order to merge resources and integrate essential service capacities given the potentially limited access to supplies, systems and equipment?
- How will you maintain the flow of inventory items to compensate for an increased demand in services if a disruption in your supply chain develops?
- How will you maintain and repair primary and supporting equipment with a reduced workforce and potential supply shortages?
- Do you have replacements available for all essential equipment on-site or locally?



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Create a Communication Plan

To main credibility and authority, it is critical that you are proactive in your communication within your agency, business, community, or organization. This means that when your employees are looking for key information – **it is timely, it is appropriate, and it is reliable.**

Decide ahead of time what kind of information must be shared, what cannot be shared (due to privacy laws, etc.), and how it is best shared to assure and equip your staff.

This may include the use of hotlines, web postings, social apps, telephone trees – or anything else that works consistently for your workplace.

It is also advisable to maintain an accurate and thorough contact information roster for all employees.

Communication Plan Worksheet - EXAMPLE					
WHO needs to know	WHAT they need to know	WHEN they need to know it	WHO will communicate	HOW we will communicate	BACKUP communication channel
CEO, COO	Significant changes in any operational status	Immediately	Shift Managers	Call Cell Phone	In Person
CIO	Changes that affect network status	Immediately	IT Manager	Call Cell Phone	Email
All Managers	Work load shifts or updates	Immediately	COO	In Person	Phone Calls
All Employees	Changes in leadership structure	Shift Changes	CEO	Email from CEO	Auto-Call System



Identify Devolution Criteria

Devolution is when you are no longer able to continue operations, and you must either: handoff operations to another entity, and/or shut down operations.

- What events would halt your business operations definitively?**
 - Loss of which specific resource?
 - Loss of what specific capability?
 - A specific percentage in workforce reduction?
- Is there another entity that can assume your business operations?**
 - How would you transfer to that entity?
 - What contracts or agreements are needed?
 - Functions, records, communication elements?
- What actions steps are required to shut down?**
 - Authority?
 - Personnel?
 - Physical assets?
 - Physical security?
 - Digital security?
 - Public Notification?

Identify Reconstitution Criteria

Reconstitution is the return to normal pre-event business operations. In some cases it should be phased to allow for graduated return.

- What events would signify the ability to return to normal business operations?**
 - Ability to resume a specific capability?
 - Reacquisition of specific resources?
 - Workforce strength threshold?
- What action steps are required to reconstitute operations?**
 - Authority?
 - Public and Internal Notifications?
 - Physical asset restoration and recovery?
 - Employee support, flexibility, or assistance? (for both physical AND mental health)



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Train and Test Plan Effectiveness

If time allows, conduct trainings and test the effectiveness of this plan with all staff.

Simple ways to train and test include:

- using regularly scheduled days off or vacation to test a process
- declaring a telework day to identify gaps in access and workflow
- supervisors can spot-quiz employees on what to do if they were not available
- test communications systems, especially all-employee channels and backups

