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# News Release

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## **BUSINESS PREPAREDNESS IS A BIG DEAL IN GEORGIA** **Emergency planning can be the difference between fortune and misfortune**

**ATLANTA** — Keeping the front door open after a flood, fire or any major disruption should be a big deal for every business in Georgia, say state and federal officials working on Georgia's recovery from September floods.

"Businesses that plan for disaster can expect less property damage, economic loss and down time than those that do not," said Charley English, Director of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA).

English, head of Georgia's flood recovery team, says that it is extremely important to protect the staff, buildings, data and inventory of a company during a damaging event. The only way to make this happen is to prepare a plan to continue operations after large-scale destruction and practice the plan regularly.

A good plan will include relocating to a different site; preserving employee, customer and vendor records; and spelling out how to operate efficiently with a smaller staff of key individuals.

Internet resources are available to help with disaster planning. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides a step-by-step approach to emergency planning, response and recovery for companies with case studies in the business library at [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

GEMA offers detailed information about family and business preparedness at [www.ready.ga.gov/Your-Business](http://www.ready.ga.gov/Your-Business).

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) does much of the heavy lifting in disaster recovery, offering low-interest loans for property repairs, as well as loans to offset the economic disruption caused by disaster. The SBA Web site, [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov), has disaster preparation tips and a list of topics business owners should consider in planning.

"Businesses need their legs solidly under them when disaster strikes, and they need regular staff training to make sure everybody knows their role," said English.

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The Institute for Business and Home Safety, a non-profit organization that promotes emergency preparedness to small businesses, offers an **Open for Business Toolkit** through their Web site, [www.ibhs.org](http://www.ibhs.org), under the “Get Prepared” menu. This kit can help any business develop both property protection and business continuity plans.

The IBHS Web site provides 13 planning forms to walk viewers through the steps that every business needs to take to stay in business after a major disruption.

These forms can help businesses consolidate information about their key people:

- [Employees \(including owner\)](#)
- [Suppliers/Vendors](#)
- [Key Contacts](#)
- [Business Functions](#)
- [Recovery Location](#)

Businesses also need these forms to perform essential business functions at a recovery location:

- [Vital Records](#)
- [Critical Telephone Numbers](#)
- [Supplies](#)
- [Equipment / Machinery / Vehicles](#)

The following three forms contain items that employees at the recovery location will use:

- [Computer Equipment and Software](#)
- [Voice/Data Communications](#)
- [Miscellaneous Resources](#)

The last form is a checklist of items to help managers assure the safety of employees and others on the premises when a disaster happens, and to take care of everyone before help arrives:

- [Disaster Response Checklist](#)

### **Insurance Counts**

An equally important part of any business plan is adequate insurance to cover damage from perils such as fire, flood and wind. Businesses should check with their agents to find out whether they are covered against risks that accompany the location of their property, type of facilities and business operations.

“One key post-disaster benchmark is how quickly businesses get back into operation,” said English. “Companies that are able to continue operations and support the rebuilding efforts of government will be the engines of recovery in Georgia.”

*FEMA’s mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.*

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*Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 800-462-7585.*

*FEMA's temporary housing assistance and grants for public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan. However, applicants who receive SBA loan applications must submit them to SBA loan officers to be eligible for assistance that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses.*

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For more information on Georgia's disaster recovery, visit [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) or [www.gema.ga.gov](http://www.gema.ga.gov) or [www.ready.ga.gov/](http://www.ready.ga.gov/) or <http://twitter.com/GeorgiaEMA>