



# Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet

A Service of The University of Kansas Transportation Center for Rural Transit Providers

## Has Your Transit Agency's Level of Preparedness Changed?

by Pat Weaver

With the five-year anniversary of 9/11 and the one-year anniversary of Katrina, we're reminded of disasters both natural and man-made. Is your transit agency more prepared than it was five years ago?

Five years have gone by since 9/11. It seems like yesterday, and it seems like an eternity ago. With that tragic occurrence, many of us wondered how we would react, and how (or if) we would recover. As a transit manager, that question not only is a personal one, but a professional one. Just how quickly could your agency get back to business after a terrorist attack or a natural disaster like a flood, fire or tornado? A program of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has developed some resources to help you answer that question and procedures to help you to get back into operation should a disaster strike.

Ready Business, an extension of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Ready Campaign, helps owners and managers of small to medium-sized businesses prepare their employees, operations and assets in the event of an emergency. Launched September 2004, Ready Business is funded by Homeland Security's Office of Infrastructure Protection. A booklet entitled *Every Business Should Have*

*a Plan* is one example of the resources available from Ready Business. This article will outline some of their key recommendations for protecting your transit agency and ensuring continuity of operations.

**You are probably aware of some of the risks in your community, but there are some you may not think of.**

### **A plan to stay in business**

Business continuity planning takes into account both man-made and natural disasters, and is a process that must occur in advance to help you to use your resources to take care of yourself, your co-workers and your agency's recovery.

Business continuity planning starts with a risk assessment—identifying which disasters are most common in the areas where you operate. You are probably aware of some of the risks in your community, but there are some you may not think of. Work with your local emergency planning committee in your county or counties to help identify risks that you may not have considered.

Once you've identified the risks, assess how your agency functions, both

internally and externally, to determine which staff, materials, procedures and equipment are absolutely necessary to keep the business operational. Identify operations critical to survival and recovery; e.g., emergency payroll, expedited financial decision-making, and accounting systems to track and document costs in the event of a disaster. Procedures for succession management should be in place; ideally including one person who is not based at the agency. In smaller agencies, you may need to be creative to identify such a person.

The next step is putting together an emergency plan, including individuals with expertise vital to your daily business functions; in transit, this includes dispatchers and drivers with the "hands-on" knowledge of your operations.

Develop a comprehensive plan to serve your passengers and your community during and after a disaster. You will need to identify key suppliers, resources and other businesses you interact with on a daily basis and develop contingencies in case any of them are unable to operate. A disaster that shuts down a key supplier may mean that you shut down, too, if you don't have a contingency plan in place.

Finally, plan what you will do if your building or vehicles are not accessible. Define crisis management procedures and individual

responsibilities in advance. Talk with your staff and frequently review and practice what you intend to do during and after an emergency.

### Protecting your investment

In addition to emergency planning and communication, there are steps you can take to safeguard your agency and secure your physical assets:

- **Review insurance coverage.**

Inadequate insurance coverage can lead to major financial loss if your agency is damaged, destroyed or interrupted for a period of time. Talk with your agent about physical losses, flood coverage and business interruption. Consider how you will pay creditors and employees. Find out what records your insurance provider will want to see after an emergency and store them in a safe place.

- **Prepare for utility disruptions.** Your operations are dependent on electricity, gas, telecommunications, sewer and other utilities. Plan ahead for extended disruptions during and after a disaster.



Examine which utilities are vital and talk with service providers about potential alternatives. Identify possible back-ups like portable generators to help in an emergency.

- **Secure facilities.** There's really no way to predict what will happen, but there are things to do to help you be prepared. Make sure fire extinguishers, smoke alarms and detectors are functioning. Think about how people and products go in and out of your building and secure the entries appropriately. Plan for mail safety by training staff to recognize a suspect package and to know how to handle it. Other mail safety strategies are available at <http://www.ready.gov/business/protect/facilities.html>. Finally, plan what you will do if your building or your

### Cyber security: Protecting your agency from electronic threats

Here are some tips adapted from [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) to protect your agency's electronic data:

- Use anti-virus software and keep it and your operating system up-to-date.
- Don't open email from unknown sources.
- Use hard-to-guess passwords (and don't tape them to your computer to help you remember them!)
- Protect your computer from Internet intruders by using firewalls.
- Back up your data regularly and keep back-ups off-site.
- Make sure everyone in the agency knows these policies, follows them and knows what to do if the computer system becomes infected.

vehicles are not usable.

- **Secure your equipment.** Some disasters may damage or destroy some or all of your vehicles or other important equipment in your building. Conduct a walk-through to determine if there are ways to secure equipment. Consider attaching equipment and cabinets to walls. Elevate equipment off the floor to avoid electrical hazards in

upgrade the building's filtration system consistent with your HVAC system.

- **Improve cyber security.** Cyber security means protecting your data and information technology systems from outside and inside threats. Some of the recommended procedures may require specialized expertise. (See sidebar above for a partial list of recommended procedures.)

### Protect your computer from Internet intruders through the use of firewalls—and back up your data regularly and keep back-ups off-site.

the event of flooding. Identify computers, parts and other equipment that are needed to keep your service operating. Plan how to replace or repair equipment if it is damaged or destroyed.

- **Assess building air protection.** Some emergencies may release toxic particles into the air. Depending on the hazard, a building may provide a barrier between contaminated outside air and the people inside. Make sure that your facility's heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) system is working properly and is well-maintained. Develop and practice shut-down procedures. Make sure outdoor air intakes are secure and away from ground level to avoid tampering. Evaluate whether you can feasibly

The *Ready Business Guide* was produced with support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). For more information on individual and business preparedness visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

#### Source:

Adapted from *Every Business Should Have a Plan*. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. [http://www.ready.gov/business/\\_downloads/ReadyBusinessBrochure.pdf](http://www.ready.gov/business/_downloads/ReadyBusinessBrochure.pdf).

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