

- » **Phones:** Discuss emergency phone services in advance with your phone company. If you're forced to move to another location on 24-hour notice, how quickly can you get your phones up and running? And can you arrange to have your incoming toll-free calls forwarded to the new location?
- » **Staff:** Unless you work for a government agency, you probably don't have redundant employees. However, you can make arrangements in advance with a temp agency to provide clerical and administrative help on short notice.
- » **Stationery:** This sounds like a small detail, but you should store a supply of all your key stationery products (letterhead, envelopes, invoices, statements, and so on) in a safe location. That way, if your main location is suddenly unavailable, you don't have to wait a week to get new letterhead or invoices printed.
- » **Hard copies:** Keep a backup copy of important printed material (customer billing files, sales records, and so on) at an alternate location.

Holding a Fire Drill

Remember in grade school when the fire alarm would go off and your teacher would tell you and the other kids to calmly put down your work and walk out to the designated safe zone in an orderly fashion? Drills are important so that if a real fire occurs, you don't run and scream and climb all over each other in order to be the first one to get out.

Any disaster recovery plan is incomplete unless you test it to see whether it works. Testing doesn't mean that you should burn your building down one day to see how long it takes you to get back up and running. You should, though, periodically simulate a disaster in order to prove to yourself and your staff that you can recover.

The most basic type of disaster recovery drill is a simple test of your network backup procedures. You should periodically attempt to restore key files from your backup tapes just to make sure that you can. You achieve several benefits by restoring files on a regular basis:

- » Tapes are unreliable. The only way to be sure that your tapes are working is to periodically restore files from them.
- » Backup programs are confusing to configure. I've seen people run backup jobs for years that don't include all the data they think they're backing up. Only when disaster strikes and they need to recover a key file do they discover that the file isn't included in the backup.