Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Who should do business continuity planning?

All colleges and departments that conduct teaching, research, or public service should have a business continuity plan. Other administrative units that provide essential support or infrastructure to these units should also do continuity planning. These two definitions encompass virtually every unit of the campus.

Should we appoint a departmental business continuity coordinator?

Yes - Typically a staff member who has access to your senior management. The role is part project manager, part group facilitator. A key person needs to be in position to coordinate activities and effort for initial development of your plan and for periodic plan review and updates.

How long does it take to create a business continuity plan?

Think of this as roughly a one-month project. Most of the month will be gathering information, agreeing on priorities, defining critical functions, and determining action items. The number of actual staff hours required is surprisingly small, because the UofM business continuity planning tool (Memphis Ready) uses a "fill in the blanks" process.

Who should be in the planning group?

Upper and middle managers: Dean, Department Chair or Department Head, directors, assistant directors, department LSP, building coordinators, etc. These are people who understand how the organization operates. Keep the group size manageable. If your unit is an academic or research department, faculty input is essential. Try to enlist at least a couple of faculty members into your group.

How does the planning group operate?

The group will typically meet and discuss, with little-or-no "homework." The coordinator will input needed information/data into Memphis Ready, often right at the meetings. Alternatively, the coordinator can provide the group with the printed plan (which includes all entries-to-date) for discussion. On occasion, the coordinator or someone else may interview a key manager or do a bit of research, but the coordinator's role should not require a heavy time commitment. UofM approach to business continuity planning asks for your thoughtful consideration of issues, not for detailed research or legwork.

How detailed and complete does our plan need to be?

Your business continuity plan can never be "complete" because you can't know what disaster you are planning for. Memphis Ready will prompt you for the appropriate level of detail, and most of those details will be things that your group easily knows or can figure out. Successful recovery from disaster will hinge largely on the ingenuity and energy of your staff on the spot. Your job in planning for business continuity is to help them with some information and some possible strategies. If you find yourself puzzling whether an answer is thorough enough, declare victory and move on!

Should we do a plan for an entire college or department, or a plan for each unit within it?

This is a crucial decision. For academic units, planning generally happens best at the level of the academic department. There are exceptions depending on the extent of integration and centralization of functions in the college. For support departments, the answer depends on the structure of the department (which functions are centralized, and which decentralized) and the number of critical functions the department performs. Contact Mark Heath at 678-3800 or rmheath@memphis.edu if you would like assistance with determining the number of plans needed for your unit.

The instruction says to identify our "critical functions" not "processes." What's the difference?

Processes are the steps needed to accomplish a function. For example, the function "provide meals for residents of university housing" is accomplished through the processes of "buying food, food storage, cooking, serving, and cleanup." We focus on major functions because processes are too specific and detailed for our level of planning.

How can we craft a plan to handle unknown circumstances?

The methodology that we employ for business continuity planning mostly avoids discussion of specific causal events that could interrupt our mission. All such causal events (tornado, fire, pandemic, human sabotage) will affect our functioning in similar ways. They will temporarily prevent us from using some of the resources to which we have become accustomed. These resources include:

- space (classrooms, labs, and offices)
- infrastructure (power, water, sewer, networks, phones)
- people (staff)
- equipment (libraries, computers, etc.)
- funds (income stream).

Our planning focuses on:

- identifying the resources that are critical
- safeguarding critical resources against loss (backup of systems & data, safe storage of research items)
- lessening the impact of losses (pre-arrangements with other organizations for mutual aid)
- replacing resources quickly (contracts with vendors)
- performing critical functions without some of those resources (teaching via distance learning technology or working from home)
- providing our people with the information they will need, post-disaster, to get the campus back in action.

At best, a business continuity plan is not a step-by-step cookbook, but rather a jumping-off point for ingenuity.

What assumptions can we make about what the campus will do for us after a disaster?

Here are some reasonable assumptions:

- Access to buildings. If campus officials have reason to suspect that a building is hazardous to enter, they will immediately close the building and call in trained inspectors. In the worst case (a major tornado with many buildings damaged), the inspection process alone could take weeks, with hazmat cleanup and repairs taking much longer. You may be unable to enter your building for an extended period of time.

- Locating temporary space. This will be a huge challenge for the campus. Administration will work closely with the effected departments to locate alternative space on campus, bring in temporary buildings, or lease space off campus.

- Computing infrastructure. Restoration of our many centrally supported IT applications will be of highest priority after any disruption. This includes email, internet, Banner, and many other applications,

as well as the physical campus data network. Definite predictions of IT resources impacted are not possible. Within your unit, you should be taking steps to backup data and planning for IT disruptions.

• Communication protocol. General communications with students, faculty, staff and the public will be handled centrally by Marketing and Communications, so that messages are consistent. As your unit resumes functioning, communications of an operational nature to your immediate faculty and staff will be your responsibility.

• Contacting your staff. This will be a departmental responsibility. Each college or department should keep its own emergency contact lists.

• Care of staff. Many staff issues arise during disaster recovery: pay, temporary leave, temporary alterations of assignment, safety, benefits, layoffs, work-at-home, stress, and family issues. You should assume that Human Resources (HR) will be available with guidance and mechanisms to assist departments in these complex areas. Conversely, departments should seek guidance from HR when uncertain how to act in these matters—both before a disaster and after it.

•Temporary staffing. Mechanisms will be available (via HR and Purchasing) for hiring temporary staff and for redeploying existing staff. Available staff that are less critical to your operation may be redeployed elsewhere.

What assistance and funding can we expect from the state and federal governments?

Outside assistance for disaster recovery will be forthcoming from both state and federal governments, but it is impossible to say before any disaster exactly what form it will take. It is important to know that the federal government never advances funds to institutions like ours for disaster recovery. Reimbursement is the path, and it is always a long one. Good documentation of expenses incurred (staff time, goods and services, etc.) is critical to obtaining reimbursement. Documentation of critical functions and the actions taken during an event and through to recovery is one of the keys to successful reimbursement.

The University of Memphis will work closely with Local Authorities, including the City of Memphis, Office of Emergency Management, Shelby County Office of Emergency Management & Homeland Security as well as the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) during any emergency or disaster event.