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Business Continuity and Emergency Planning Policy and Procedure

HS310 Health and Safety Policies

October 2024

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1. Introduction
   1. MHA’s priority is the safety and wellbeing of colleagues, and those who use MHA’s services including residents, tenants, and members, as well as any other visitors. This policy and procedure outline the business continuity and emergency planning requirements that all MHA services must follow to ensure that critical functions and operations can continue or be rapidly resumed in the face of various disruptions or emergencies.
   2. If in the event of a fire, flood, gas leak or explosion, which requires full evacuation to a place of safety refer to Incident Response and Escalation Policy for guidance on escalating to relevant senior managers. For any suspicious or potentially intentional activity MHA’s Terrorism, Suspicious Behaviours, Packages and Bomb Threats Policy can be referred to for guidance regarding specific situations.
2. Scope and Purpose
   1. This policy is relevant to all MHA services including Care Homes, Retirement Living, MHA Communities, and Central support. The standard operating procedures are aimed directly at Care Homes and Retirement Living.
   2. This policy aims to ensure that MHA, when it comes to business continuity, can:
   * Respond all day, every day - twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.
   * Minimise and control damage.
   * Make sure that care and support carries on with the least amount of disruption.
   * Make sure that normal working is resumed in the shortest possible time.
   * Safeguard the people using our services, colleague, visitors, and contractors.
   * Avoid long term disruption for people using our services.
   * Effectively manage our emergency (disaster) management plans, media and / or insurance interests.
   * Maintain public and customer confidence.
   * Make sure of the immediate & long-term security and protection of our business interests.
   * Meet legal and regulatory requirements.
3. Definitions

| Term | Definition |
| --- | --- |
| **Business Continuity** | * Refers to the strategic and integrated approach that an organisation takes to ensure it’s critical functions and operations can continue or be rapidly resumed in the face of various disruptions or emergencies. * Involves identifying potential risks, developing plans and processes to mitigate risks, and implementing measure to maintain essential business functions during adverse situations. * The goal of business continuity is to minimise downtime, protect assets, and sustain overall business operations allowing the organisation to recover from unexpected events effectively. |
| **Business Continuity Threats** | * Business continuity is threatened by things and events that may go wrong which have implications for the service offered because of interruption, inconvenience, or disruption. For example: * Power cut * Gas leak * Boiler (water / heating) failure * Adverse weather (snow) * Minor flood * Minor fire * Cyber-attack, information breach, technical failure or phone failures |
| **Emergency** | * A sudden, unexpected, and often critical situation that required immediate attention and action to address potential harm, loss, or damage. |
| **Emergency Planning** | * A structured process of developing and organisation detailed strategies, procedures, and resources to effectively respond to and manage emergencies or unexpected events. |
| **Evacuation** | * The organisation and controlled relocation of individuals or assets from a potentially hazardous or dangerous area to a safer location. This can be: * **Partial evacuation** of people and / or belongings to other parts of the building (temporary for business continuity). * **Total evacuation** of people to outside of building (temporary for business continuity) – unlikely due to ‘zone’ system but possible. * **Full** **evacuation** of people and / or belongings to a place of safety (emergency disaster management plan). |
| **Disaster** | * A disaster is so called because of the potential to cause serious or fatal harm to people or permanent damage to MHA property. Examples include: * Fire * Explosion * Flood * Building collapse |

1. Business Continuity Threats
   1. The main message is to ‘deal with it’ and inform people that it’s happening. colleagues on duty must not put people at risk by delay, for example - a distinct smell of gas means that colleague must isolate the supply, stop all flammable activity, open windows, and contact The National Grid Emergency Helpline – formally Transco (0800 111 999) before contacting the manager / on call manager.
   2. If the Home/Scheme Manager is not on the premises, colleagues must have the autonomy to modify the guidance below:
   * **Between 7am and 11pm**, the colleague in charge of the Home/Scheme must ascertain the home manager or deputy manager on call’s permission to contact the relevant 24 hour call out service to remedy the event. The Home/Scheme Manager must inform their area manager at the first reasonable opportunity, that this call has been made.
   * **Between 11 pm and 7 am** the colleague in charge of the Home/Scheme must contact the relevant 24 hour call out service to remedy the event. At the first reasonable opportunity, the colleague in charge must inform the Home/Scheme Manager who must inform their area manager that this call has been made.
   * **Out of Hours** If the disruption is out of hours colleagues must follow the procedures set out in the Incident Response and Escalation Policy. Out of hours on call rotas are available on MHA Connect [Emergency out-of-hours call out rotas](https://intranet.mha.org.uk/page/15765?SearchId=2698450)
   1. If the interruption to / disruption to the service is likely to last for more than 4 hours, a senior manager must be informed at the earliest opportunity.
   2. For specific threat examples and response plans, refer to **Appendix 1**.
2. Evacuation
   1. In extreme circumstances, the person in charge of the building may need to take the decision to evacuate the building before the emergency services arrive. However, colleagues should initially follow the same procedure as they would for fire evacuation refer to Fire Safety Policies and Procedures.
   2. If possible (but not at the risk of injury), colleagues must try to take the following during an evacuation:
   * The emergency ‘grab bag / box’ including the fire emergency file
   * Medications
   * Laptop
   * Spare keys and
   * Residents’ records.
   * Phone
   1. Disaster events may require full evacuation to a place of safety for some or all of the people living on the premises because of:
   * Significant damage which makes part or all of the premises uninhabitable.
   * Loss of, or permanent damage to equipment which means that colleague cannot provide care and support to people.
   * No water supply, electricity, or other utilities for more than two days.
   * Colleague cannot get into or leave the premises.
3. Emergency Disaster Management Plan
   1. If the event that threatens business continuity goes on for longer than is reasonably expected, colleague may have to implement the Emergency (disaster) Management Plan.
   2. The manager must risk assess the reason for any delay in the restoration of a service and the impact on people using our services / colleagues and, in consultation with a senior manager, decide whether to escalate to the emergency (disaster) management plan. For example, waiting for a lift part in the event of a lift breakdown may take some days and be a cause of complaints but colleague can arrange contingencies. If possible, partial evacuation by moving rooms in the home or scheme is more realistic than total or full evacuation.
   3. The manager must make sure that the emergency (Disaster) Management Plan relevant to the location is:
   * Kept in the service locality and accessible to colleague – for example, emergency file in emergency bag / box.
   * Discussed with colleague in preparation for an incident.
   * Stored on the MHA intranet ‘emergency plans.’
   1. The priority in disaster management must be:
   * **Safety** - making sure of the ongoing safety of people.
   * **Communication** - to people on premises at the time. Phoning others. Asking colleagues to come and help.
   * **Service** **needs** - assess, identify, and salvage or throw away. Arrange for repairs to property / equipment.
   * **Restoration** - risk assess the ‘new’ and the future risk of a repeat event and Identify timescales
   * **Critical** **Incident** **Analysis** - report writing and documentation and lessons learnt.
   1. If possible (but not at the risk of injury), colleagues must try to:
   * Isolate the gas and electricity supplies.
   * Make sure of no flammable activity (smoking, oxygen, gas) on or near the premises.
   * Turn off any cooking in process.
   * If the above is not possible, the manager / person in charge must inform the emergency services that this has not been done.
   1. There must be two local places of safety with disabled access and a secure office facility which will act as a ‘control centre’ for meetings etc.
   2. For advice or assistance with transfer of residents, homes and schemes must know the local authority emergency planning or disaster management officer’s contact details.
4. Emergency Grab Bag
   1. The manager must make sure that an emergency bag / box / container is in an agreed location and is available for colleague to ‘grab and go’ (see internet for an example of a ‘grab and go’ bag). The bag must contain (at a minimum):
   * Hi Viz jackets (numbers required relative to the size / number of colleague required to manage an emergency situation).
   * Foil blankets (for the number of people living at the service plus 25 for others on site).
   * 2 torches + spare batteries.
   * 2 clip boards and 2 pens.
   * A first aid kit with extra ‘cool gel’ for burns.
   * A charged mobile phone with £10 credit / or if local poor reception a walkie-talkie set and spare batteries or other reliable means of telecommunication.
   * An accessible emergency (fire) file which contains the Emergency (Disaster) Management Plan, and any other information that managers see as relevant. All names, addresses and contact numbers listed must be for emergency use only and colleague must not breach confidentiality or access the numbers for ‘routine’ business.
   1. Check the contents of the bag / box against the list above at least every three months using the Emergency Grab Bag Checklist Form, to ensure all items are present and in date update any relevant list when there is a resident / tenant, colleague, or supplier change. where relevant, use the mobile phone every month (according to provider instructions) so that the SIM does not expire.
5. Long Term Plans
   1. Long term arrangements will include:
   * Emergency services release of premises.
   * Colleagues’ visits to people that have been relocated, contact with families and stakeholders.
   * Meetings of a ‘critical response team’ (home manager, area manager, estates representative, IT representative & possibly an HR representative).
   * Assessment of damage – both the current situation and for a forward plan. This may involve other professionals – for example, surveyors or loss adjusters.
   * Obtaining costings for any re-build, repair, redecoration, or replacement of equipment etc.
6. Suppliers and Contractors
   1. Throughout the process of business continuity management, it is worth considering which external organisations play a part in your home or schemes critical functions:
   * What if one of these organisations suffered a disruption or went out of business?
   * Have you identified ways of “filling the gap” at short notice?
7. Standard Operating Procedures

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Requirement | Details |
| **Emergency fire folder** | * All homes and schemes must have an emergency fire folder with the following information (or applicable information depending on each home and scheme, refer to the Fire Safety Policy |
| **Business Continuity and Emergency Plan** | * All homes and schemes must have an Emergency Disaster Management Plan reviewed annually. |
| **Emergency Supply Contacts Form** | * Completed with relevant contacts. |
| **Grab Bag** | * All homes and schemes must have an emergency grab bag. Use the Emergency Grab Bag Checklist Form * To ensure the appropriate contents of the bag. A nominated colleague must check the contents of the grab bag / box at least every three months, to ensure all items are present and in date. |
| **Emergency Grab Bag Checklist Form** |

1. Roles and Responsibilities

| Role | Responsibilities |
| --- | --- |
| **All Colleagues** | * Deal with business continuity threats immediately when they happen. * If the Home/Scheme Manager is not on the premises, colleagues must have the autonomy to modify the guidance set out for business continuity threats. |
| **Delegated / Nominated Colleague** | * Check the emergency grab bag in line with this policy. * The Deputy Manager (or other designated colleague as appropriate) must sign for their approval of the emergency disaster management plan * A nominated colleague must check the contents of the grab bag / box at least every three months, to ensure all items are present and in date. |
| **Home and Scheme Managers** | * Oversee the emergency disaster management plan in line with this policy. * Oversee the emergency grab bag in line with this policy * Ensure that there are two local places of safety with disabled access and a secure office facility which will act as a ‘control centre’ for meetings etc. * Find and record the local authority emergency planning / disaster management officer’s contact details. * Approve any contingency required during a business continuity threat. * The Home/Scheme Manager must inform their area manager at the first reasonable opportunity, that a business continuity threat call has been made. * The Home/Scheme Manager or most senior colleagues member on site liaises with the emergency services and relays instructions to colleagues or instructs colleagues to do what the lead fire / police, rescue officer tells them to do. * The manager must review and re-issue the emergency disaster management plan at least every year. * All colleagues must be aware of the plan and understand that, if activated, they must follow any instructions issued. |
| **Area Manager** | * Follow Incident Response and escalation procedures, as required * To notify IT and Estates Department, media, and insurance management functions, of a business continuity threat or disaster. * Must sign for their approval of the Emergency Disaster Management Plan |
| **Operations Support Manager** | * Must sign for their approval of the emergency disaster management plan |

1. Training and Monitoring
   1. Compliance is assessed through direct observation, monitoring, and supervision of our colleagues.
   2. Health and safety and fire safety training programmes are available for colleagues during induction and periodically as defined within MHA’s learning Zone.
2. Continuous Improvement
   1. The following have been identified as areas for continuous improvement for MHA’s business continuity and emergency planning policy:
   * Central support operating procedures and associated policy documents added to the policy, so Head of Department and central Management align with wider MHA procedures already detailed in this policy.
   * Alignment with MHA’s Risk Management policy
   * Alignment with Incident Response and Escalation Policy
   * Addition of MHA’s critical functions and operations (key risk management summary).
3. Communication and Dissemination
   1. This policy is disseminated and implemented within all MHA services through MHA’s channels of communication.
   2. Each colleague’s line manager must ensure that all teams are aware of their roles, responsibilities.
   3. This policy will be available to the people we support and their representatives in alternate formats, as required.
   4. Any review of this policy will include consultation with our colleagues, review of support planning, incident reports, quality audits and feedback from other agencies.
   5. Queries and issues relating to this policy should be referred to the Standards and Policy Team [policies@mha.org.uk](mailto:policies@mha.org.uk)
4. EDI Impact Assessments
   1. Equality, Diversity, and Impact Assessment to be confirmed.
5. Resources
   * Emergency Disaster Management Plan Form
   * Emergency Supply Contacts Form
   * Emergency Grab Bag Checklist Form
   * Fire policy and procedure
   * Risk Management policy
   * Incident Response and Escalation Policy
6. Appendices
   1. **Appendix 1: Business Continuity Threat Examples**

| **Threat** | **Pre-Incident** | **Response** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Flooding** | * Be aware of the realistic flood risk to your premises, a postcode based ‘flood risk’ search is available on the Environment Agency website which considers the threat from river and coastal flooding. www.environment-agency.gov.uk * If your premises are within a flood risk area, then it is wise the register with the Environment Agencies Flood line system. This will give you early warning of any live flood threat. * Be aware that the EA’s flood maps do not show any areas which may be at risk due to flash flooding (rainfall in excess of the capacity of the drainage system), these happen with little or no warning. * Drainage flooding is difficult to predict, but identifying historic evidence of flood problems or looking at the local lay of the land may be an indication, premises that sit at the base of even gentle slopes could be prone to surface water run off flooding. * Be aware that where there are drainage problems flooding can also enter the premises from ground floor drains (sinks and bath plugholes) and toilets. * Also remember that flooding can also come from burst pipes (internal flooding). | * If in a flood risk area, discuss and liaise with area manager and estates to keep a stock of sandbags or other flood defence measures (flood boards, gel filled bags). Make sure that you know how to fill and lay traditional sandbags correctly. * Formulate emergency procedures with clear trigger points: * Safeguard people - make sure people are away from any risk of contact with flood water and that they are ready to evacuate if required. * Safeguard premises - protect premises using flood defence products such as sandbags. * Safeguard property - ensure that as much property as possible is moved to higher levels particularly valuable and irreplaceable items. * Consider evacuation at all times when flood threat is imminent. (Your flood evacuation may need to be different to your fire evacuation procedures). * Also make sure that your potential evacuation premises are not within a flood risk area, or they may be equally affected when you come to need them. * Many properties are higher than the internal base, flood water can remain long after the flood has gone, therefore increasing the damage caused. |
| **Water and Heating Supply Interruption** | * If heating / water loss occurs, assess the effect of the failure related to time of year and weather temperature / forecast. * Contact the heating engineer as soon as possible. * Try to find out the cause for water disruption and the probable length of shut down. * Seek advice from the water company / local health protection unit. * Assess the risk to people using our services and the colleagues that have to work in such conditions. * Move people to warmer areas of building. * Ask people (and other colleagues) to put on additional layers of clothing. * Have extra blankets available to keep people as warm as possible. * Make sure additional hot drinks are available. * Use hot water flasks for storing and moving hot water (be careful when filling from boilers). * Take steps to reduce heat loss from building – close windows / doors and curtains. * Keep an eye on people for signs of hypothermia. * Use disposable dishes and utensils. * Take additional temperature readings and if necessary, rent / buy additional equipment (risk assess the use of any additional equipment). * Watch out for burst water pipes in cold weather. * In addition to the above, if the water supply fails, colleagues must assess the impact on, for example, cleaning the home / scheme, colleagues hand hygiene, drinking water, toilets, medication rounds and heating systems. * Colleagues may need to use bottled water. In extreme circumstances, the local water company may provide water bowsers | |
| **Electricity Outage** | * Ensure that detailed site records are held and made available to any contractors who are planning to dig near utilities routes. * Be aware of the additional risks of outages during local building work, work on electrical/water systems etc. and ensure you are prepared for possible disruptions. * If funding allows then consider alternate power supplies – for example, backup generators. * Know what in the premises, including equipment, is dependent on electricity. * Consider keeping stocks or having emergency access to alternate sources of heating, cooking, and lighting (including torches, head torches, camping LED lights, blankets) * Make sure that colleagues know about the use of emergency items such as emergency lighting, portable generators, and other electricity generators. * Most commercially used premises will have emergency lighting to ensure all evacuation routes remain lit, as well as this the premises fire alarm will have a battery back up in the event of power failure. * Where emergency lighting and battery backed alarm systems are in use make sure that you know the life of the battery backups. * Plan specific actions around the battery life within these systems – for example, based on a premise with a 12-hour battery back up on emergency lighting and fire alarm system. | * Initial power cut - contact electricity supplier to obtain information about the likely duration of cut off. * First Hour - Gather together emergency supplies. * Consider bringing all residents into one area. * 4 Hours in - Standby emergency evacuation premises and transport. * Contact relatives of residents to assist with potential evacuation. * 6 Hours in - Contact electricity supplier to obtain information about the likely duration of cut off. * Contact alternate premises. * Contact transport providers. * Evacuation to place of safety if required. * If a power failure is suffered, make sure you understand the cause, and what, if anything is done to prevent a recurrence. |
| **Snow Incident** | * Make arrangements to receive early warnings of severe weather either directly from the Met Office or through the county council. * Cascade warnings to all colleagues, those currently on shift and those who are at home. * Consider colleagues shortage contingency actions, the main impacts of a heavy snow incident will be the inability for colleagues and essential contractors to get to and from your place of business. * Minimise travel to essential journeys only. * Take emergency provisions inside your organisations vehicles - warm clothing, warm blanket, hot drink. Encourage colleagues to do the same with their personal vehicles. * Be prepared for potential power failures. | |

1. Version Control

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Version** | **Version Date** | **Revision Description / Summary of Changes** | **Author** | **Next Review Date** |
| 4 | June 2022 | * No changes. Due to expected new ways / systems of working, the review date has been extended. | Head of H&S | June 2023 |
| 5 | January 2024 | * No changes, the review date has been extended. This policy is currently under active review. | Standards and Policy Manager | May 2024 |
| 6 | February 2024 | * Statutory review completed; regular compliance review required including a review of standard operating procedure. * Continuous improvement section added ready for regular compliance review. | Standards and Policy Manager | September 2024 |
| 7 | June 2024 | * Updated policy reference to new Incident Response and Escalation Policy | Head of Standards and Policy | September 2024 |
| 8 | July 2024 | * Review date extended. | Standards and Policy Manager | November 2024 |
| 9 | October 2024 | * Amended links to out of hours reporting. * Included reference in section 3 Definitions to cyber and information security | Head of Standards and Policy | November 2025 |