



Contingency Planning and Disaster Recovery

FinePeter Consulting Inc.'s first experience with a disaster recovery scenario was with a client who was located in the World Trade Center on Sept 11, 2001. Thanks to our advanced planning, their MarCom division, and our specific responsibility, was up and running at a temporary location within two days with only the previous day's loss of new files. However, many years of client projects, CD software images, installation codes and software serial numbers were all restored for use on new equipment purchased in the following weeks. Let me add that no one in my client group was hurt in the disaster.

Since then, all of our clients have adopted different degrees of off-site backups based on the 9/11 experience but most have not thought about the equally timely concern of what happens during an epidemic (or pandemic) where their otherwise safe and intact office is no longer accessible by many of their commuting staff.

This is not an "end of the world" scenario nor a panic reaction to news reports and this is not a total loss situation like 9/11 was for those companies located at "ground zero".

The premise is that your employees may not be able to go to your offices if they live outside of the office city due to a locally imposed quarantine. This might be from an epidemic that causes the city, either where the employee is or where the employer is, to be quarantined with no one coming in or going out. Most cities, not just New York, have adopted plans and scenarios in this regard. Most often discussed is something like a flu epidemic but a chemical spill might impose similar limitations on travel. Even a localized neighborhood problem like a fire or bomb scare could stop you and your staff from gaining entry to your facilities for weeks.

Some questions that need to be considered:

- 1) Can you afford to shut down your company for weeks or even a month? Will YOUR clients, who may be located outside of this quarantined area be as understanding as you would like them to be and just wait for things to return to normal for your company to either ship merchandise or to provide services?
- 2) Can you do without many of your work force having access to company file servers or company email for weeks?
- 3) If the answer to any of the above questions are NO, are you already set to have those employees work from their homes and if not, what do the employees need to be able to do in order to work off site and how do they access the company servers?
- 4) Do those employees already have computers at home loaded with the same software they have in your office or do they need computers as well as email and file server access?
- 5) Is there insurance coverage you can get for this situation or would FEMA compensate your company for such disasters?

These questions and whatever planning is needed cannot be solved at the quarantine stage. This must be worked out in advance - buying additional portable or desktop computers for off site or replacing office computers with new equipment and then migrating the older office computers for these needs. One more aspect that requires advanced planning and purchasing is in establishing high-speed connectivity to the Internet via DSL, Cable Modem or FIOS service in those key employees' homes and then to your own company network where your files and email servers reside. However, security concerns now come into play so giving access while protecting your network go hand in hand.

FinePeter Consulting Inc. can help formulate such ideas, planning and options as well as the necessary infrastructure you will need. We think this is definitely something you need to think about even if you decide you won't spend the time or money now.