# Business Continuity Best Practices

**Ensure Management is Fully Committed.** Owners and Senior Management are responsible for the protection of company assets and long-term survival of the organization. If they do not support business continuity it is difficult to sustain a program or business during a crisis or major disruption.

Identify a Business Continuity Coordinator. A dedicated individual is essential for supporting and leading the business continuity activities. Dedicated means someone whose job description specifically states business continuity, even if it is a part-time responsibility.

**Plan for Crisis and Risk Communication.** A trained communications spokesperson authorized to represent the organization during a crisis is essential for managing any event. Pre-scripted talking points for all types of hazards, especially FEAD or FMD incidents, are equally important along with establishing relationships with other key business stakeholders and agencies.

**Acknowledge Needs and Vulnerabilities.** Business Continuity should be a priority for the entire organization.It is important to realistically identify and reduce risks. The industry-specific Business Impact Analysis and Risk Assessment help identify the key people, critical resources, processes, and technology so that appropriate mitigation measures can be identified and implemented. Every business department must be involved in an integrated plan, thereby giving everyone a stake in that plan’s success.

**Understand Data and Systems Dependencies.** For Information Technology (IT), think about how you connect to critical data sources (e.g., HR/Payroll, Commodities, etc.) and external service providers. Create redundancy and backup means to access data and service providers; alternate means of data access will allow for business continuity as well as expedite recovery time following data server restoration.

**Maintain a Comprehensive Backup Policy.**  All vital records must be included in your data backup plan. Much of an organization's recovery may still depend upon paper records, especially work-in-progress. The organization should be aware of the location of vital records and have an adequate protection programs in place (fireproof cabinets, offsite duplication, clear desk policy, etc.).

**Focus on Operations.** People, resources and processes that drive the organization are the primary concern for business continuity. In your planning, identify and focus on key individuals, resources and the Key Business Functions that are critical to business continuity.

**Plan Ahead for Preparedness, Response and Recovery.**  It is important to take steps before an event or incident occurs in order to minimize business impact, protect against damage, ensure personnel safety and help with restoration of Key Business Functions that may be disrupted. It is important to have personnel who are trained in recognizing animal disease, assessing damage to facilities following a disaster, enforcing security in response to an incident, and practicing good communications internally and externally. The goal for resumption of all functions and return to “business as usual” must be fully understood by all personnel (management and employees).

**Proactively Manage FEAD Incidents.** Managed movement of non-infected animals and non-contaminated animal products from non-infected premises in the first 72 hours of an FEAD/FMD outbreak is critical and poses unique challenges. Be prepared to follow the direction of the Incident Commander, if assigned, and be familiar with the National Animal Health Emergency Management System, [NAHEMS *Guidelines: Continuity of Business (COB)*](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/emergency_management/downloads/nahems_guidelines/cob_nahems.pdf)for operations during a FEAD/FMD incident.

Clearly Define What Constitutes a Business Interruption. A clear understanding of what constitutes a serious incident or hazard is essential. Not all disruptions are a disaster; many are merely daily operational setbacks. Understand the difference and identify who is the final authority for putting the BC Plan into action.

**Inform and Train Personnel.** Personnel must be properly trained in the use of the BC Plan. If they are not, they will be ineffective when an incident occurs. Appoint a Business Recovery Coordinator and develop a system (e.g. regular meetings, email updates) to ensure that personnel are familiar with the plan, know how to access it, who triggers it, and understand their own roles in carrying out the plan during a crisis or incident. See [FEMA Ready Program](http://www.ready.gov/planning) for more information.

**Maintain the Plan.** People, business requirements, facilities, partners, vendors, and regulations all change over time, resulting in the need to update the BC Plan. You should design and maintain a rigorous reassessment and training schedule and update the plan based on lessons learned.

**Establish Plan B for Critical Personnel.** Make sure you have a second and third backup person trained for each critical response and recovery function (including the Business Recovery Coordinator) in the event that a primary individual is unavailable (i.e. on vacation, affected by the crisis). These functions include making the decision to trigger the plan, leading the internal communication effort, contacting key customers, and responding to the media.