



DISASTER RECOVERY

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1. We are being made so vividly aware of the possibility of a catastrophic disaster and just how crippling it can become. During the occurrence of a disaster there is little to be done except to wait until it is over and then put into place previously prepared plans. In preparation for any disaster we must attempt to approach the problem from a reverse view point. Start at the end and work our way to the beginning of the incident and determine the best approach for resolving each major issue, and when you begin imagine the most critical situation that you may face. In a subset we must look at the effect of the issue and attempt to resolve all aspects of the particular situation with resources at your dispose.
2. Without planning we are left without the ability to reconstruct files, relocate, provide personnel, and our office functionality will be jeopardized thereby eliminating voter confidence in our electoral process. Now for the good news; with proper planning and foresight we will have critical files warehoused, have data and tape files in safe holding places and will have the ability to get emergency equipment in place and can bring the office back to functional status in a relatively short time frame.
3. No cookie cutter approach can be applied to each county for we are all different, we have differing physical and political geography. The first aspect of any disaster or emergency is our people. Make certain that you have some mechanism in place to contact your Board members and staff. Only you can address key factors that will impact your office and its operation, however, here are some generic points to ponder. One key function is to make sure that all of your equipment is insured. **DO NOT** assume that since the state or county purchased it that it becomes automatically covered. Prepare an accurate inventory and provide that listing to the person in your county that is responsible for insurance coverage, making certain that it is included in insurance roles. This may actually help the county be eliminating old equipment that is still being carried and should be eliminated. Ensure that the data contained on those devices have back-ups which are kept either in a safe deposit box or off-site. It is a common business practice to have data warehoused in places many miles away from the physical location of your operation. Backing up computer file will allow you to come back to operational status more quickly. Have printing resources available, either through off-site, other agency, or contract vendors who can assist you in short turn around cases. A back-up site may be necessary to conduct operations until a permanent site can be re-established in the event of a catastrophic loss of your physical facility. Cross train all your personnel so that you will have a smooth transition in the event your staff is not available, is temporarily out, or may not return at all, this includes the critical aspects of your job as director. Above all keep your board

appraised of all potential problems so that they may be making those decisions that are critical to their position.

4. It is when the sky is a beautiful Carolina Blue that the preparation must take place. The last thing anyone should attempt is to recover from a disaster without a plan. Working through a disaster of any magnitude requires the identification of resources, here are some but not all:
 - a. County Board of Elections – Your board will be in a position to speak with the State Board for Direction in the event of a disaster that may be outside the scope of their authority.
 - b. SBOE - Will give positive direction and can assist with the reinstallation of data networks, databases, advice on the acquisition of equipment necessary to get you back to an operational status.
 - c. Emergency Management – These folks are professionals at looking at your plans to give you an idea of the areas that may need further attention. Have your emergency management personnel come to your site and evaluate your site for threats that you may not have addressed. Although they are not elections officials they may give you some ideas on strengthening your physical plan. EMS personnel may also be able to help you with emergency power and lighting should the need arise. Use this valuable resource.
 - d. Sheriff Dept. – Should you need physical security you may enlist your sheriff's help in securing your facility until files are removed or until repairs are made.
 - e. Media – This is one of the most important resources you have. The media can help you in addressing the issue of notification should you be attempting to continue with an election, notify the general population if you are delaying operations, or make general announcements as you recover from any disaster. **THE MEDIA IS YOUR BEST FRIEND – HELP EACH OTHER.**
 - f. GIS – This department can help you determine what routes may close during a disaster and the effect that it may have on your recoverability. GIS can pinpoint problem areas or can have an elections overlay in place that can be used to identify alternate voting sites should you have a catastrophic loss. If you can think of it – GIS can digitize it!
 - g. Utility Companies – These folks deal in disasters and recovery. They may be able to give you ideas of projected recovery times.
5. If you prepare the greatest plan in the world and never exercise it to expose its flaws, you may as well go ahead and trash it. Take your plan and put it through a disaster, be highly critical of all areas, fix the problems, reinforce the positives. Have your emergency management personnel look over the plan for deficiencies and evaluate their advice because only you will truly know if it works or not. A simple exercise may take a couple of hours to complete but those two hours may save you days or weeks in recovery time.