Recommended and Sample Business Continuity Action Items

What are Action Items?

Action Items are the most important part of Continuity Planning. The process of thinking through the steps you need to take to prepare is critical to developing a culture of preparedness. Action Items are things that can be done now (or any time before a disruption strikes) to make your unit more prepared. Some of your Action Items may be beyond the scope of your unit to perform. That's OK, use them to start a conversation with colleagues.

Many action items are applicable to all units or departments on campus. Others are unique to a department's operation and critical functions. Here are some recommended action items that will likely be useful to your department, as well as some additional action items applicable to academic departments.

- Create and distribute contact list for the department to ensure ability to communicate during an emergency or a disruption. List can be saved on phones and copy kept at home.

- Create contact list comprised of key institutional contacts that your department may depend on during a disruption as well as any third-party vendors that are critical to your operation.

- Determine ability of members of your department to work remotely/work from home. Do they have a computer and adequate internet access?

- Implement training and utilization plan to ensure that employees know how to use remote access technology. Understanding how to use these tools is critical and so too is practice using them. For example, require staff to set up remote VPN access (if approved to do so) and test it, check to ensure that staff can access the shared drive and important files through VPN or remote access on a University laptop, host a staff meeting via Zoom to ensure familiarity with the tool, access key web tools and platforms remotely, etc. Identify any issues with remote access and address them now.

- Organize usernames and passwords for any online tools and platforms that are critical to your operation. In the case that you can't use your office computer where those may be automatically saved, you'll want to ensure your ability to access from a remote location/other computer.

- Identify needs for and implement cross-training among employees in the department.

- Create backup plan to cover staff absences.

- Document key business processes that may need to be handed off to personnel who do not typically fulfill that function.

- Communicate with employees regarding the need to save all files and important data on the University shared drive so that they are automatically backed up. Remind employees about the University's data security policy and expectations. Discourage the storage of data locally on computers.

- Communicate with critical third-party vendors and assess their ability to provide service during a disruption. Identify backups where needed.

Additional Action Items for Academic Departments

- Distribute Continuity of Learning Plan to all faculty within department, ensure that all syllabi include information regarding continuity of learning within the course.

- Develop plan to encourage and assess faculty use of online learning tools within Blackboard, Zoom, etc.

- Create plan for all faculty in department to attend professional development workshops focused on Continuity of Learning.

- Share message with faculty to ensure that all faculty use Blackboard to keep grades current and communicate with students.

- Safeguard research materials and other critical data. Ensure that files are saved on University shared drive so that they are automatically backed up.

- Prepare alternative assessment strategies.

- Maintain current curriculum in an online Curriculum Management tool.

- Encourage/assist Principal Investigators to train lab staff in disaster issues.

- Encourage Principal Investigators to devise plans to cope with refrigeration failure.

- Maintain electronic copies of current syllabi on shared drive.

- Identify alternative lab or studio space and consider establishing use agreement.

- Inventory live specimens and develop plan for care during a building closure or utility disruption.

You can begin implementing these action items now. To further develop a comprehensive business continuity plan visit Suffolk Ready and get started. As you work through the Suffolk Ready planning tool, pay close attention to the guidance provided on each planning page. For additional support and guidance please contact Tim Albers, Business Continuity Manager, at 617-973-1142 or **by email**.