



# Pandemic Business Continuity Planning

# Building a COVID-19 Business Continuity Plan

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The following are points to consider when implementing a business continuity plan to address a pandemic situation, according to [Dr. Jim Kennedy from Lucent Worldwide Services](#).

## Planning Considerations

- » Develop a crisis management plan tailored to a pandemic.
- » Develop a plan for an alternative workforce in the event that a large portion of the usual workforce is impacted by a pandemic. Estimates are for potential absenteeism rates of 10 to 25%, with larger rates in metropolitan areas.
- » Plan on taking special precautions to assess the health of the workforce and potentially plan to turn back infected workers who report for work.
- » Plan on how to deal with the emotional impact of such events as death and potential of death on the individual's family as well as the workforce in general.
- » Companies should plan for reduced production or service delivery based on reductions of customer demand, labor force, raw material supply or energy resources needed for operations.
- » Companies should entertain plans to work cooperatively with other companies to maintain critical business services and ventures in the event that this is necessary
- » Develop contingency plans for raw material and supply stockpiling as these resources may be impacted by a pandemic, especially those that are imported or rely on imported raw materials for their production.

## HR Policy Development/Adaptations

- » Changes to policies defining absenteeism
- » Changes to policies on teleworking or telecommuting
- » Changes to travel policies
- » Changes to 'use of videoconferencing' policies
- » Changes to flexible work hours and alternate workplace policies.

## Technology Considerations

- » Use of tele or videoconferencing instead of face-to-face meetings
- » Increasing capacity of remote access facilities
- » Increasing trunk capacity of telephone systems to accommodate increase use of teleconferencing and telephone meetings
- » Increasing the capacity of Internet connectivity.
- » Improved information security protection due to increased technology use.
- » Increased use of VoIP or cellular phones to allow for management, sales and service colleagues to be accessible wherever they are.

## Workforce Considerations

- » Develop and deliver internal communications and training of the workforce in dealing with proper reactions to a pandemic.
- » Hospitals and healthcare facilities will be severely overwhelmed and probably have insufficient resources to treat patient load, company should be prepared to offer internal medical assistance to its workers or others in the event of a pandemic.
- » Review insurance coverage specifically reviewing coverage in regard to the impact of a pandemic on business operations and employee health.
- » In the event of food, medicine, and other shortages company should be prepared to provide aid to both to employees and to customers.
- » Identify and train back-up staff for key positions in the event that key personnel are impacted by a pandemic.
- » Consider in-house day care facilities.

## Raw Material Supply Considerations

- » Plan on the assumption that shortages will take place.
- » Make sure that if raw materials are unavailable for some reason related to a pandemic, there are sufficient surge capacities to allow for continued production.
- » Make sure that alternative sources are identified for critical domestic and imported raw materials?
- » Make sure that adequate maintenance and repair supplies are obtained, as lead times to acquire such materials could be severely impacted by the pandemic.

## Transportation Supply Considerations

- » A pandemic will cause restrictions in the movement of raw materials and products, or shortages of fuel may occur; make sure, therefore, that contingency plans are in place to provide adequate movement of product to sustain business operations.
- » Make sure that waste management systems are designed for surge capacities in the event that movement and processing of wastes is disrupted.
- » Plan for alternate transportation sources.
- » Plan for providing transportation for critical workers to and from work locations.

## Communication Considerations

- » Prepare for and communicate the communication channels that the company will utilize to keep employees, customers, and suppliers informed as to company activities during the pandemic.
- » Company should develop pre-planned media statements for use when needed.
- » Company should have contingency statements prepared for delivery to its workforce.
- » Early communications should be made to suppliers and customers to set expectations.
- » Alternate communications channels need to be developed in case normal communication channels become unreliable or overloaded.

## Customer Considerations

- » Anticipate what customers will expect in terms of product or service demand, and delivery during the pandemic.
- » Determine what product or services are likely to be impacted the greatest by the pandemic.
- » Develop a prioritization for product and service delivery for customers if production or service delivery is adversely impacted.
- » Communicate any changes to lead times for notification to the customer if the capability to provide the goods or services significantly reduces.
- » I am sure that there are many more things to be considered. I hope that I have stimulated thought and a need for further inquiry and dialogue between contingency planners and business leaders. We need to prepare, let's not wait too long or before it is too late.

The above considerations were [sourced from](#) Dr. Jim Kennedy, Business Continuity Practice Lead and Distinguished Member of Consulting Staff - Lucent Worldwide Services

# Sample Pandemic Planning Policy

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Following is a sample pandemic planning policy businesses may customize to their particular needs.

## Purpose

[EMPLOYER] strives to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all employees. This Pandemic Illness policy outlines our overall response to a pandemic illness and our emergency-preparedness and business continuity plan. It outlines specific steps [EMPLOYER] takes to safeguard employees' health and well-being during a pandemic illness while ensuring [EMPLOYER]'s ability to maintain essential operations and continue providing essential services to our customers. In addition, it provides guidance on how we intend to respond to specific operational and human resource issues in the event of a pandemic.

## Pandemic Illness Defined

According to the federal Centers for Disease Control, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and other organizations that monitor public health threats, pandemic illnesses may occur when mutating flu or other viruses become transmissible to humans, who generally lack any natural immunity to fight off the viruses' adverse health effects. Because infected humans are so contagious, they become the primary vehicle for pandemic illness spread. The more humans who become contagious, the more widespread the disease becomes and the more rapid the spread is. Generally, pandemic illnesses occur in waves, with each new group of infected people in turn infecting others.

Pandemic illness poses a serious global threats to public health and our economy, conceivably costing billions of dollars in lost productivity from absenteeism, payouts of sick leave or workers' compensation, disruption in transportation services, and lost sales. Inability to predict when such a disease might strike and with what severity makes it incumbent on [EMPLOYER] to consider how our business might be affected and to articulate what needs to be done to respond to an outbreak.

## Identification of Essential Personnel

[EMPLOYER] has identified and designated as essential personnel certain employees whose jobs are vitally important to our continued operation in emergencies. We expect only designated essential personnel to be available for work during a pandemic illness. We acknowledge, however, that even essential personnel might become ill and unavailable to work or not be able to reach our worksite because of conditions beyond their own or our control. Consequently, [EMPLOYER] and its subsidiaries, affiliates, and industry partners have devised and agreed on back-up arrangements under which designated personnel in locations outside our respective areas are trained and equipped to fulfill the duties of unavailable essential employees. In addition, we have equipped our most essential personnel with all the resources, including computers, cell phones, and back-up generators, that essential employees need to work remotely during emergencies.

*{NOTE: If you are including this section, you should also provide a list of essential personnel to all managers and employees as well as outside parties with a need to know}.*

## Remote Work Locations

[EMPLOYER] acknowledges that during a pandemic illness, local, state, or federal authorities might prohibit or severely curtail individuals' access to and use of public services and public transportation; close or prevent access to buildings or public highways; isolate or quarantine buildings' occupants; and prevent inter- or intrastate delivery of goods and services. We cannot predict and have no control over such authorities' actions and acknowledge our legal duty to comply with outside authorities' directives. We are prepared to continue key “bare bones” operations from a number of remote work locations, including essential employees' home offices. We have installed at all remote work locations all the equipment necessary for off-site telecommuting operations. In addition, we have designated a secure Web site through which essential personnel can communicate with each other and outside authorities.

## Infection-Control Measures

[EMPLOYER] takes a number of steps to minimize to the extent practicable exposure to and spread of infection in the workplace, which is an ideal site for contagion because of workers' close proximity to one another. As appropriate, [EMPLOYER] recommends measures that employees can take to protect themselves outside the workplace and encourages all workers to discuss their specific needs with a family physician or other appropriate health or wellness professional.

### **Ill Employees**

[EMPLOYER] expects employees who contract the flu or other highly contagious illness have been exposed to infected family members or others with whom employees have been in contact to stay home and seek medical attention as necessary and appropriate. [EMPLOYER] expects such workers to notify us as soon as possible of exposure or illness, using our secure telephone hotline, which channels calls to our emergency-response call center.

[IF APPLICABLE] At our discretion or the direction of outside authorities, we can require the isolation and quarantine in our on-site clinic of any infected employees who come to work despite exposure or need for medical attention.

### **Vaccinations**

[EMPLOYER] requires all essential personnel to maintain up-to-date vaccinations and to obtain annual [EMPLOYER]-paid flu shots, if available and not medically contraindicated. We require essential personnel to certify that they have obtained the necessary inoculations and to maintain a copy of that certification, which must be provided at our request. [EMPLOYER] is entitled under our state's Pandemic and Emergency Health Preparedness Act to receive from health care providers medical information created as a result of employment-related health care services, such as inoculations, provided to employees at [EMPLOYER]'s specific request and expense when such information is needed to process insurance claims. We maintain the confidentiality of all such employee medical information.

### **Mandatory Employee Training**

All employees are at risk of exposure to flu viruses, both in and outside the workplace; therefore, [EMPLOYER] requires all employees to attend initial or refresher training annually in September to become informed about what to do when a flu outbreak occurs.

Training, which is customized for our business and conducted by a panel of outside experts and representatives from our Training, Risk Management, and Plant and Facilities sections, addresses information summarized in this document and, more specifically, such issues as availability of flu shots; symptoms and health effects of specific illness and/or influenza, treatment, and sources to contact for appropriate medical care; steps to take if exposure is suspected; company representatives to whom to report known or suspected exposures, and procedures for reporting exposure to co-workers, family members, friends, or others who are ill with flu; proper use of [EMPLOYER]-provided personal-protection equipment; proper hygiene in the workplace and at home; and communications. Supervisors and HR are responsible for recording and maintaining documentation on every employee's participation in required training.

## **Personal Protection Equipment**

[EMPLOYER] maintains on site adequate supplies of recommended personal-protection equipment, such as face masks, eye protection, rubber gloves, and anti-bacterial hand gels and wipes, which [EMPLOYER] can require workers to use. We urge all employees to speak with their personal physician about types and proper use of personal-protection equipment in the home.

## **[IF APPLICABLE] On-Site Clinic**

[EMPLOYER]'s fully equipped on-site health clinic is staffed at all times by full-time, [EMPLOYER]-paid medical professionals who are trained to respond to workplace medical emergencies and are familiar with all protocols to be followed during a pandemic illness.

## **[IP APPLICABLE] On-Site Cafeteria**

[EMPLOYER] has no control over the independently owned and operated cafeterias in our building; however, [EMPLOYER] strongly advises employees who are working on site during an pandemic illness to avoid purchases of foods whose sanitary preparation cannot be verified and certified.

## **Facilities Maintenance**

[EMPLOYER]'s Plant and Facilities manager regularly inspects the workplace for signs of heating, air conditioning, or other equipment in need of replacement or repair. [EMPLOYER]'s Plant and Facilities staff coordinate closely with [EMPLOYER]'s cleaning and waste-removal contractors to maintain our physical plant in top condition. [EMPLOYER] approves the installation or use wherever possible of improved equipment or cleaning methods to guard against the spread of infection in the workplace. Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects like door knobs, cabinet handles, counter tops, elevator buttons, and stair railings. Facilities shall also ensure adequate supplies that promote healthy hygiene, including tissues, soap, and hand sanitizer.

# **Human Resources Policies**

## **Employee Leave and Pay**

In the event of pandemic illness, [EMPLOYER] grants all nonessential personnel immediate administrative leave. [EMPLOYER] pays workers on administrative leave a reduced salary, and continues such reduced salary for one-week periods up to a maximum of six weeks. (**NOTE:** *This sample policy is based on what many larger employers are doing and may not be economically feasible in your company. While it is generally recommended that employers be as generous as they can to protect infected employees and those employees asked not to work to stop the spread of the virus from severe economic loss, the employee leave and pay is at the employer's discretion*).

[EMPLOYER] monitors emergency conditions daily to determine how long administrative leave must continue and, following consultation with outside authorities, advises employees when to expect to return to work.

## **Family and Medical Leave**

If applicable, [EMPLOYER] places on family and medical leave any workers who fall ill with flu or other highly contagious illness must be absent from work to care for an infected family member. [EMPLOYER] requires such employees to notify [EMPLOYER] as soon as possible of need for family and medical leave. [EMPLOYER] allows employees to use accrued paid annual and sick leave in lieu of unpaid family and medical leave. [EMPLOYER] requires employees to take unpaid family and medical leave once all accrued paid leave is used.

[EMPLOYER] requires all employees to certify that they have received, read, and fully understand [EMPLOYER]'s family and medical leave policy and its use in a flu or other contagious disease outbreak. (See [EMPLOYER]'s related Family and Medical Leave Policy.)

## **Business Travel**

[EMPLOYER] makes all reasonable efforts to eliminate the need for travel by taking advantage of technology that allows us to communicate or otherwise operate electronically. Generally, in the event of an pandemic illness, travel on [EMPLOYER]'s behalf is immediately suspended and limited to a select group of essential personnel who have obtained required travel authorizations from [EMPLOYER] and, if necessary, outside authorities.

## **Emergency Contact Information**

Employees are required to notify their immediate supervisor and Human Resources of any change in emergency-contact information within two weeks of the change. When providing such information, employees, especially those who have children or care for elderly relatives, should identify individuals on whom they can depend if the employees themselves become sick at work and must be isolated and quarantined in [EMPLOYER]'s on-site clinic. Supervisors and Managers are required to maintain in the workplace and at home an up-to-date emergency-contact list for their unit or department.

## **Special Needs and Accommodations**

[EMPLOYER] is required by law to notify first-responders about employees with medical conditions that could be compromised because of a pandemic illness. [EMPLOYER] urges such employees to confidentially self-identify to Human Resources so that we are aware of and can prepare for you to receive any special medical expertise you might require if you become severely ill on the job. Human Resources maintains the confidentiality of any information you provide, making it available solely on a need-to-know basis and only when needed by emergency-responders.

## **Employee Assistance Program Services**

[EMPLOYER]'s employee assistance program (EAP) services remain available to you to the extent practicable and reasonable during an influenza or other contagious illness outbreak. [EMPLOYER] has contracted with our EAP provider to make available to you a team of crisis-management specialists with medical backgrounds. Our provider partners with [EMPLOYER]

and local authorities as appropriate to ensure the reasonable availability and continued provision of critical information (such as where to go to obtain medical assistance for yourself or ill family members), respite care, use of personal-protection equipment, psychological and emotional support during a pandemic, including assistance and support following the death of an infected family member. Contact information for our EAP is maintained on our dedicated Web site, published on posters throughout the workplace, and included in information packets mailed to every employee's home.

## Communications

### Employee Communication

Following is an example of communication to employees.

Dear [EMPLOYER] Team,

We wanted to let you know that the leadership team is actively monitoring information about the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is encouraging all organizations to develop precautionary measures, which we are doing. We've assembled a team to review our crisis plan for pandemic illness, which is part of our Business Continuity Plan, and we will update the policies and practices associated with that plan if/when necessary. We wanted to share with you the measures we are taking to ensure the health and safety of our entire staff.

At [EMPLOYER], we are following the updates and guidelines provided by local, national, and international health agencies, and we recommend that you do the same. We thought it would be helpful to remind everyone about general health tips, which we provide for you below.

The best way to prevent infection of any sort is to take precautions to avoid exposure to the virus, which are the same precautions you would take to avoid the flu. Everyday actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses are:

- » Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- » Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- » Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- » Stay home when you are sick; be fever free for 24 hours without the use of medication (i.e. Motrin, Advil, Aleve, Dayquil, etc.) before returning to work.
- » Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- » Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces (cell phones, water bottles, computer screens, keyboards).

Here are links for you to visit the CDC website for the most updated and thorough information on both COVID-19 and seasonal flu:

COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Flu: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>

### **Outside Authorities**

[EMPLOYER] and its Emergency Operations Team partner with local, state, and federal emergency-response and health agencies to ensure legal compliance with emergency-response protocols to which [EMPLOYER] is subject and to coordinate efforts to maintain safety and security in and outside the workplace.

In the event of a conflict between directives issued by [EMPLOYER] and directives issued by local, state, or federal authorities, such as the federal Department of Homeland Security, [EMPLOYER] directs all employees to obey all orders issued under local, state, or federal law.

### **Action Escalation**

[EMPLOYER]'s Emergency Operations Team, which is responsible for ensuring our company's ability to continue operating in emergencies, has devised a system under which essential personnel can be directed to take specific actions at a specific time based on a series of alerts ("Warning", for example, or "Full Shutdown") that take into account the seriousness of conditions at hand. [EMPLOYER] trains all essential personnel in the use and understanding of this communications system.

### **[IF APPLICABLE] Call Center**

[EMPLOYER]'s remote emergency-response call center is activated in the earliest stages of a serious flu outbreak. Employees are instructed to call this center, using [EMPLOYER]'s secure hotline number, for pre-recorded messages and assistance from live operators. [EMPLOYER] provides separate secure hotlines for communications with customers, suppliers, vendors, and government officials. [EMPLOYER] communicates information about these hotlines via its dedicated Web site.

### **[IF APPLICABLE] Dedicated SharePoint or Web Site**

[EMPLOYER] maintains a secure (password-protected) Web site, [provide url], that is devoted to Pandemic Illness issues generally and to [EMPLOYER]'s responses specifically. You will find on this easily navigable site a copy of this document; easy-to-understand descriptions of influenza and other applicable illness and their health effects; hygiene factsheets; recommended infection-control protocols for home, workplace, and travel; copies of [EMPLOYER]'s core travel, leave, pay, benefits continuation, health and safety, and workers' compensation insurance policies; our roster of essential personnel; contact information for [EMPLOYER]'s Emergency Operations Team, as well as key company officials available to you in an emergency; and numerous links to local hospitals, first-responders, government emergency-response agencies (for example, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), and local, state, and federal public health and safety organizations offering information that you and your family can use to protect yourselves. Along with [EMPLOYER]'s secure emergency-information hotline, this site is your one-stop source of information on what to do, when, and how in the event of a pandemic illness in our area.

### **Other Media Channels**

In an emergency, [EMPLOYER] consults with outside authorities to coordinate dissemination of instructions or other important information as quickly as possible to all employees. [EMPLOYER] communicates with employees via [EMPLOYER]'s secure emergency-information hotline and dedicated Web site, local radio and television stations, and secure Web sites of industry partners and affiliates. (See the section below titled Pandemic Illness Resources List for information on these media and how to reach them.)

### **Pandemic Illness Resources List**

[EMPLOYER] maintains a list of the names, telephone numbers, and Web addresses of key [EMPLOYER] representatives and designated essential personnel who are available to answer your questions about Pandemic Illness: [EMPLOYER] Guidance and Actions. Your immediate supervisor, who is required to attend regular information and training sessions on [EMPLOYER]'s emergency-response and business-continuity planning and preparedness initiatives, as well as designated representatives of our subsidiaries, affiliates, suppliers, and industry partners, are directed to distribute up-to-date copies of this list, as well as any additional related information or guidance employees, suppliers, vendors, or customers might need.

The categorized list of key internal and external contacts and all appropriate media through which [EMPLOYER] communicates with employees also is available on our dedicated Web site. When updated, a new copy of the list is mailed to each employee's home.

## Availability of Business Continuity Plan

[EMPLOYER]'s Emergency Preparedness and Business-Continuity Plan is the result of many hours of discussion and planning with industry partners, public health experts, and other appropriate parties. [EMPLOYER] regularly reviews and shares this plan (and any updates to the plan) with [EMPLOYER]'s affiliates and industry partners, insurers, designated first-responders, local health care facilities, and local, state, and federal government authorities, all of whom play a role in ensuring your safety and well-being in an emergency. In addition, [EMPLOYER] regularly tests implementation of the plan.

[EMPLOYER] makes available on written request printed copies of [EMPLOYER]'s complete Emergency Preparedness and Business-Continuity Plan, which includes the foregoing summary of [EMPLOYER]'s response to a pandemic illness.

*Much of the above referenced sample continuity plan was sourced from ThinkHR.*



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