

Business Continuity Planning - Testing and Maintenance

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Testing and exercising a Business Continuity Plan, and regularly maintaining it, is a key part of being able to respond to incidents and put a business on the road to recovery.

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Introduction

A key part of a successful and complete Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is validation. Testing the plan to ensure it is suitable for use, up to date, and still concentrates on the correct areas the business has set out in its Business Impact Analysis are key priorities.



Validating a BCP

The BCP and the management system behind it, can be validated by:

1. Exercising – training for, assessing, practising and improve the business continuity capability
2. Maintenance – **ensuring that the organisation's business continuity arrangements are relevant, up to date, and operationally ready to respond**
3. Review – assessing the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the business continuity programme and identifying improvements

10 Stages of Validation

The Business Continuity Institute recommends 10 stages in the validation process. This depends on the size and complexity of the organisation. Some can merge where suitable, but the 10 stages are:

1. Define the exercise goals, objectives and scope
2. Review past exercises to identify areas that may have been previously excluded
3. Discuss priorities and areas of perceived weakness with senior management
4. Review the current risks and threats
5. Decide on the type of exercise to be undertaken
6. Determine budget available, if it is required
7. Check the availability of required personnel, considering that all areas should take part
8. Create a realistic incident to base the exercise around: an incident with a small impact will result in minimal findings, while an unrealistically major incident would be of little use when considering more likely occurrences
9. Obtain management approval, guiding them towards something meaningful, rather than something brief, with time for everything required
10. Run the exercise, record results, review any learnings and update the BCP where necessary

Types of Exercise

There are many types of exercise that can be put together, but these fall broadly into the following categories:

Discussion-based or Desktop Exercise

The simplest and fastest type of exercise to organise involves participants talking through current issues and walking through the plans, focusing in one area or finding a solution to a particular problem.

Scenario Exercise

Similar to above, but concentrating on a set incident, such as a fire. Participants are expected to respond as a timeline moves on, and the BCP undergoes a solid test. All areas of the business are involved; incident management, including staff communication, etc., and dealing with Emergency Services, leading on to business recovery, and contact with suppliers and sub-contractors, etc.

Loss Scenario Exercises/Live Exercises

The most involved, and time-consuming, but the tests with the most realism, and relevant results. Individuals are presented with a realistic incident, such as a fire or flood, as if it is happening right at that moment. The incident management team should respond immediately, liaise with the Emergency Services, account for all staff, and communicate with the media. Meanwhile the business recovery team concentrates on assessing the damage to facilities, and impact on the business, and sets in motion the recovery plans and objectives, contacting customers, suppliers and sub-contractors, etc. As the exercise goes on, variables are **'injected'** into the scenario, giving the teams obstacles to overcome that could occur in real-life.

Live exercises would see this type of activity, but also involve moving staff to disaster recovery sites, following a full evacuation. This can produce realistic training for the evacuation plans and personnel issues including headcount and communications. Consideration should also be given to the resource including the budget required, transport, etc.

Aviva Risk Management Solutions can provide assistance in creating Business Continuity Plan Testing, or putting on a **Loss Scenario Exercise, based on our Insurance Survey Reports. Aviva's Specialist Partner for Business Continuity, [Horizonscan](#)**, are experts in this field and can lead Continuity Exercises for any type of business or industry, and any complexity.

When Should a BCP be Maintained?

Plan maintenance is essential and ensures that the BCP and its activities remain up to date. Failing to do so could result in significant problems if the plan is invoked in the event of a real incident. Persons with key roles in the recovery process could have changed roles within the business, or even left the organisation. The process and/or machinery may have been altered, resulting in the documented recovery activity, or sub-contracting, etc. being out of date.

As well as planned maintenance, there should be updates when there is any fundamental change to the business, for example:

- Exercising or testing is complete; plan is updated and improved with findings
- Changes to processes
- Changes to the premises
- Changes to key personnel
- **Changes to machinery, or the organisation's IT systems/equipment**
- Changes to the established recovery process, e.g. loss of a sub-contractor, or alternative premises
- Regular planned maintenance is due, suggested at six monthly intervals

LOSS PREVENTION STANDARDS

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For more information please visit:

[Aviva Risk Management Solutions – Specialist Partners](#)

Sources and Useful Links

- [Business Continuity Institute](#)
- [Continuity Central](#)
- [ISO 22301:2012](#)

Additional Information

Relevant Aviva Loss Prevention Standards include:

- Business Continuity
- Business Impact Analysis
- Business Interruption Insurance – Indemnity Period and Maximum Indemnity Period
- Business Interruption Insurance – Committed Costs

To find out more, please visit [Aviva Risk Management Solutions](#) or speak to one of our advisors.

Email us at riskadvice@aviva.com or call 0345 366 6666.*

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