

Does your Office Leasing Plan Include Disaster Recovery?

Disaster recovery is usually one of the last things a business considers as part of their office relocation and leasing plan. One hopes that one never faces a disaster, but what would you do if the elevator broke and your customers could not reach your office? What if a fire on another floor prevented your employees from reaching your office, or if the ceiling collapsed because of a water leak? Or worse yet, what if your office was completely destroyed?

A well thought out disaster recovery plan can help assure that your business gets up and running with minimal downtime after a disaster strikes. While insurance can cover costs; gaps in customer service, support or loss of critical documentation can set your business back months if not years. The following are considerations for your disaster recovery plan.

Office Space

Large corporations with many office locations can temporally transfer operation or employees to another location, but even then, the transfer process should be thought out to minimize disruption. Smaller businesses don't have that option so devising a short term plan for your operations would be advisable. What would you do if your office was not usable?

Can your employees work out of their home? What are your short term temporary office options if needed? Your commercial real estate agent can help you scope out some reasonable options for temporary relocation. Having a documented plan will assure that quick action takes place if needed.

Documentation

Loss of critical documentation can cripple a business.

Machines can be replaced, but documentation unique to your business can't. Fire, vandalism and severe water damage can completely destroy all "onsite" documentation, primary or back up. Strong consideration should be given to offsite storage or offsite electronic back up of documentation. There are many services available that completely back up your server or each individual office computer at relatively low costs. If you currently have a significant amount of paper documents, there are companies that specialize in high volume scanning that can digitize your paper at pennies per document. There are also companies that offer secure offsite paper document storage in "near disaster proof" facilities.

Equipment

Most typical office equipment such as computers, copiers, desks etc can be replaced fairly quickly, but a good recovery plan should insure that all major software system licenses are kept and are easily accessible for software installation into new computers. Some off site backup systems can recover your software as well. There are a number of suppliers that can assure that your critical equipment and furniture is replaced within days. A complete list of all your office equipment and furniture with a replacement source identified is highly recommended.

Leasing Agreements

Make sure that your lease states that your obligation to pay rent stops (the legal term is "abates") during the time you are denied reasonable use of, or access to your space.

In addition to fire or damage, the same scenario plays out for eminent domain, forces of nature, strikes etc. Make sure your rent abates during these times. Also, don't let the lease allow for more than 90 days for the landlord to make the determination as to whether or not he can repair the premises or building and return to normal business function if one or

more of these aforementioned events occur.

All too often, businesses put recovery planning on the back burner, hoping that disaster never happens. Unfortunately, disaster does not consider whether you are ready or not before it strikes.