

Emergency Weather Planning for Businesses: Essential Steps to Stay Prepared

from The Safety Council of Southwest Louisiana



Southwest Louisiana is not for the faint of heart. We live in an area that is regularly threatened with severe weather, up to and including the severest of hurricanes. There are no guarantees when it comes to weather (or any) emergencies - but the surest way to prepare is to have a PLAN to ensure the safety of yourself, your employees, and your business. The Safety Council of Southwest Louisiana can help - we can assist you in developing or reviewing/refining an emergency plan (Policy & Procedure) - but for cost-free alternatives, keep reading.

In an era of increasing climate volatility, businesses must prioritize emergency weather planning to safeguard their operations, assets, and employees. Whether it is hurricanes, floods, or heatwaves, a well-thought-out plan ensures that a business can navigate unpredictable weather events and minimize disruptions. An effective plan addresses the before, during, and after. Here are some tips:

1. Risk Assessment

Begin by identifying the types of weather hazards that could affect your business based on your geographic location. Understand the potential risks to your property, equipment, and workforce, and estimate the financial impacts of downtime or damage.

2. Communication Plan

Establish a clear chain of communication to keep employees and customers informed before, during, and after a weather emergency. Use multiple channels such as emails, text alerts, and emergency apps to ensure everyone is reachable. Designate key staff to coordinate emergency responses and share critical updates with stakeholders.

3. Business Continuity Plan

Develop a continuity plan that outlines if and how your business will continue to operate during and after extreme weather. This could involve remote working arrangements, securing off-site data backups, or partnering with suppliers who are unaffected by the weather.

4. Facility Preparedness

Ensure your physical location is ready for various weather events. Invest in structural reinforcements, backup power systems like generators, and flood barriers. Regular maintenance of your property and equipment can prevent costly damage during storms or extreme temperatures.

5. Employee Safety Protocols

Safety is paramount. Train employees on evacuation routes, shelter-in-place procedures, and first-aid measures. Stock up on emergency supplies such as food, water, first aid kits, and portable power sources.

6. Review and Update Regularly

Emergency weather plans are not static. Review and update your plan annually or after major incidents to address any gaps. As weather patterns change, so should your approach to preparedness.

Being proactive with emergency weather planning can save businesses significant time, money, and resources. As your local Safety Council, we are particularly invested in the safety of our community members. By ensuring you're prepared, companies can not only withstand severe weather but also look out for the safety of people and property, which will allow you to bounce back faster and maintain trust with customers and employees alike.

The Safety Council of SWLA keeps in close contact with several local resources for information regarding severe weather, and we recommend that businesses of all sizes do the same. They are:

- Calcasieu Parish Office of Emergency Preparedness – offers step-by-step emergency preparedness for individuals, as well as additional resources to help you stay informed, like the CalcaShout Emergency Alert System, emergency links, and local phone numbers
- KPLC – provides local news, weather, and information for Calcasieu and surrounding Parishes, including a Hurricane Center and live-streaming news reports
- U.S. government websites, like [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov), can be another source of information to help plan for and react to hurricanes or other emergencies, like floods, earthquakes, explosions, and more

Remember – no possession is worth putting a life in danger. Preparation is our best means to ensure that extreme weather does not permanently impact us. For more information about how

the Safety Council can help you create an Emergency/Hurricane Preparedness Policy, please email info@scswla.org.