

# Is Your Firm Prepared?



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Imagine: You're in your office, and suddenly you hear an explosion outside. What should you do? Rush to the window to see what's happening? Crawl under your desk? Call the police? Disasters – such as pandemics, terrorist attacks, weather-related emergencies, workplace violence and chemical spills – seemingly have become commonplace. At any time, one of these threats could disrupt your firm's client relationships, employees, business continuity, revenue and brand.

Much as firms' data departments prepared for perceived "Y2K" threats at the dawn of the new millennium, law firm administrators must prepare their staffs for other potential threats. Successful firms take proactive steps to be prepared to conduct business while protecting their most important assets: their employees.

Law firm administrators should ask the following questions:

1. **If a pandemic outbreak, terrorist attack or natural disaster affects our offices, how safe will our client relationships, staff, operations and revenue be?** Don't assume safety precautions are in place. Take the responsibility to know exactly how your employees could be impacted, and then protect them from negative consequences.
2. **Who knows what to do during a crisis?** Every office must have a recognized group of trained people who are fully prepared to assist employees and operations during a crisis. Are your team members so well prepared that, even in an emergency, they can go on auto-pilot and take appropriate actions?
3. **Do we have an "Enterprise Preparedness Program?"** Most firms have developed data recovery plans, but what about protecting the entire enterprise? Have the unique needs of every office been considered? Is a program in place to protect the firm from a natural disaster? How about a terrorist attack? Workplace violence? If you have a plan, where is it? If it is in a book on a shelf, it's not going to be helpful in the event of an emergency. Be sure that all key information is also available online.
4. **How will we communicate?** Can every attorney and staff member receive emergency instructions through text messaging within minutes? Who instigates these messages, how are they distributed and to whom? A comprehensive "phone tree" that includes other forms of information delivery should be in place.
5. **Can you create and implement a program on your own?** Does my law firm have the experience, time and resources to develop and implement an effective global enterprise preparedness program? It may take millions of dollars to create an always-on, fully implementable preparedness program. Can you afford to take the time and make the financial investments required to create a successful strategy from scratch?

If you answered "no" to any of the questions above, your firm may be at serious risk. Take the time to find out where your firm stands and get the advice you need – but be sure the information is fresh and the training continuous. You could be saving more than the firm's bottom line. You could save your colleagues' lives. ✱