



Risk Management *Tips*

Protecting Your Business Personal Property: A Crisis Averted

The loss of business personal property due to disaster or theft can result in significant replacement and lost opportunity costs. Business personal property typically includes items such as computers, phones, furniture, and a variety of other equipment and tangible assets that are a part of your business.

Loss control strategies are as numerous as the potential events that can cause the loss. Following are some key guidelines to consider:

Keep a current inventory of your business personal property. Maintain receipts, serial numbers, and manufacturer's information for easy identification in the event an item becomes damaged or stolen. Consider taking pictures or a video of your inventory and store in a secure, off-site location. If you need to file a claim, this will facilitate the process and aid in the recovery of stolen items.

Protect your electronic equipment. All electrical equipment, including data line connections, should be plugged into surge protectors. Without them, power surges can damage equipment and create unwanted downtime. It is important to install surge protectors properly. Keep cable lengths short and straight, and push plugs completely into sockets. Some surge protectors have indicators to show the circuit is grounded and operating properly. Consult with a licensed electrician to ensure that your electrical distribution system is grounded correctly.

Place computers, telephone switchboards, and other sensitive electronics above ground level, and utilize dust covers to protect against a roof leak or burst pipe.

If you own laptops, invest in computer tracking technology to assist in recovery, should they be stolen. A loss of this equipment can quickly create a crisis.

Maintain your facility's equipment. Inspect equipment frequently and follow maintenance practices according to manufacturer's guidelines. This will help ensure the safety and longevity of your equipment.

Safeguard vital records. Properly preserving your records makes it easier to get your organization up and running after an emergency. Vital records include financial and insurance information, personnel and client files, administrative and collections information, and engineering plans and drawings.



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- ❑ **Store records in a secured location.** Personnel and vital records should be kept in a secured, fire-rated file cabinet or safe. Store critical electronic files and equipment in areas where they can be quickly evacuated, along with staff. You can easily save critical information on a compact disc or external storage device for easy retrieval. Also, ship your data to off-site locations or storage facilities located away from coastal areas and flood plains.
- ❑ **Establish and practice a crisis management plan.** Assign specific responsibilities to staff members so there is no confusion about who should evacuate employees, records, and crucial business equipment. Very importantly, have a backup plan in case critical personnel are out at the time of a catastrophe. Know ahead of time what you need to take with you in an emergency. Identify alternate power sources, and evaluate the crisis response capabilities of your vendors.



According to the Insurance Institute of America, the following information is most often included in a crisis management procedures manual:

1. The purpose, scope, and organization of the manual.
2. The structure of the crisis management hierarchy, including the chain of command, composition, and general responsibilities of the emergency teams appointed.
3. Evacuation instructions, including explanations of alarm signals and diagrams of exit routes.
4. Loss prevention and loss reduction procedures organized by peril (natural, human, or economic) and separated into pre- and post-event measures.
5. Procedures, addresses, and telephone numbers for contacting the fire department, police, medical services, pollution-control personnel, and other sources of help, including senior management.
6. Communication procedures during and after the emergency, especially procedures to notify employees of progress towards resuming operations. Also address who will manage media inquiries.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.