



**Chicago Botanic Garden**

Photo by Bill Biderbost

Welcome...

# BRPA - In The Loop

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**Cynthia Berry (DeVry Inc)**

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In this edition of **BRPA - In The Loop**, **John Mantsch**, BRPA President, emphasizes networking opportunities at the **August 17th Social Event** and encourages both members and non-members to come out and make connections at this **FREE** event. BRPA Vice-President **Dan Johnson** reminds us about National Preparedness Month activities and how you and your organization can take part in this preparedness initiative. **Marcia Kittler**, our **guest columnist** provides specific guidance on how to manage our facilities before and after an incident occurs.

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## Guest Column

**Marcia Kittler, CBCP – MK Business Solutions**

### **What Will You Do When The Roof Falls In?**

#### **Protecting HQ and Other Critical Facilities**

Have you ever heard someone complain, "You sound like a broken record"? Broken records can be trying, especially when they apply to severe weather. And this year, our nation and region have had plenty of broken weather records.

In fact, on Friday, July 29, the National Weather Service reported that Chicago set a new record for the wettest July in recorded history. The 11.15 inches of rain that fell in Chicago last month beat the 9.56-inch record set in July 1889 (when Grandma was still a twinkle in her daddy's eye). And it can be worse; in fact it has been worse. Chicago's all-time, any-month record stands at 17.10 inches of rain in August 1987.

The Midwest's cornucopia of daily weather events has repeatedly dragged inevitability to and through our doors, roofs, basements, windows, and walls. It's not a matter of IF, but WHEN severe weather will impact your facilities. How can WE, as business continuity professionals, best protect

our physical workspaces?

### **5 Steps That Lead to Facility Preparedness:**

1. Know Your Business Requirements for Facilities
2. Know Your Facility
3. Know Your Vulnerabilities
4. Know Your Resources and Opportunities
5. Know Your Plan

#### **1. Know Your Business Requirements for Facilities**

The January 2011 blizzard that embarrassed Mayor Daley by stranding hundreds of motorists on Lake Shore Drive also closed Chicago public schools for the first time in 12 years. As 20.2 inches of snow fell in Chicago's third-largest winter storm on record, a large manufacturer with an office/factory/warehouse/distribution facility in the northwest Chicagoland area was activating its business continuity/disaster recovery plan to deal with a power outage. Responders busy protecting IT resources weren't paying much attention to the snow piling up outside. Soon, their dock area was clotted with large drifts. Overnight, compacted snow was plowed onto their property from neighboring driveways, and the sub-zero temperatures that followed the storm turned the mess into ice. Early the next morning, the facility manager found the ice impossible to move with the company's old snow blower. The dock was impenetrable.

Securing the attention of a snow removal service was challenging; this was Chicago's third worst winter storm ever, and demand for plows was extraordinarily high. Contractors who were answering telephones were happy to put this company on the far side of long waiting lists. This firm's business continuity team had failed to consider the impact that the dock and other lost facility resources could have on the business. During the two weeks it took to reopen the dock doors, the company lost thousands of dollars in revenues, disappointed customers and took a reputational hit. What an opportunity to benefit from lessons learned! Can you enhance your business continuity plan with facility-specific mitigations, RTOs and recovery strategies that support business requirements?

Just like any building, every contingency plan requires a sound foundation. Reliable recovery plans are founded on comprehensive risk assessments and impact analyses that establish prioritized recovery objectives in support of business requirements. When facility assets are included in risk assessments and impact analyses, facility availability and recoverability are optimized.

#### **2. Know your Facility**

Reliable facility recovery plans are also founded on up-to-date inventories of the facility's features, assets and resources. There are many to consider. Behind those snowed in dock doors, for instance, were the organization's staging areas – also crucial to the shipping, receiving and logistics functions. Recognizing the value that building design, contents, utilities, etc., contribute to the business facilitates the mitigations and strategies that ensure facility availability and prioritized recovery.

#### **Design**

Recognizing the benefits of the facility's design is as valuable as identifying facility hazards and risk. For example, appropriate use of fire barriers and air handling (intake/exhaust louvers and filtration systems) can contain incidents and save lives. Provisioning ready access to information about the structure promotes response and recovery successes. Maria Vergara, AVP of Business Continuity Management at RBS, shares her experience with the horrific 2004 LaSalle Bank headquarters fire. Because information about the structure was readily available to first responders, the fire department did not waste time considering whether to drill through the ceiling as part of the firefighting strategy. "Our facilities team worked closely with the Chicago Fire Department before the disaster, and the building blueprints were already on file with the City before the incident.

## **Contents**

The facility recovery plan will incorporate mechanical equipment protections and replacement priorities. Warranties, service schedules, contact information for installers and maintenance providers should be included, and safety features noted (e.g., elevator recall capabilities and shut-off switches). Identifying multiple, reliable sources and lead times for critical equipment and parts contributes to facility recovery success.

## **Utilities**

"Just the facts, ma'am." Sgt. Joe Friday would make sure Dagnet's plan includes the facts. What utility companies provide service to your facility? Training the facility team about the utility equipment, service entry points and shut offs for electricity, natural gas, water and sewage is a wise investment that may pay off in dividends. Business requirements, examined closely, may identify the need for multiple points of entry, emergency sources or alternate suppliers.

## **Power (Electric/Gas)**

Power availability is an instrumental and fundamental element of most contingency plans. The comprehensive facility plan will consider storage tanks and lines, transformers, switchgear and circuit controls, along with reliable service contractors, generators, reserve supplies and spare parts.

## **3. Know Your Vulnerabilities**

The threats, vulnerabilities and risks a particular facility is regularly exposed to are typically taken into account during a comprehensive risk analysis. What about additional risks that may present themselves during a disaster, e.g., when the facility boundaries have been compromised?

When the facility is surrounded by yellow tape, established relationships with first responders and proper credentials can help ensure the facility recovery team gains entry into the property. Well-timed, disaster-appropriate facility security services and access controls are effective mitigations.

## **Hazmat**

Facility recovery teams must be aware of the intermittent and frequent or regular presence of hazardous materials in, on, and near the property. Types, locations, quantities, and reference numbers are most helpful, as is responder access to MSDS sheets, protective garb, and other safety materials.

## **4. Know Your Resources & Opportunities**

The resources that can be employed to mitigate facility risk and promote facility recovery success are most effective when catalogued and kept handy. These resources might include, as appropriate:

Landlords/Property Managers – Careful pre-incident reviews of leases and agreements help ensure planned facility recovery roles and responsibilities appropriately dovetail with, and take full advantage of, contractual commitments for security, maintenance, restorative repairs, etc.

Emergency Service Providers – Water/fire/mold remediation services are wonderful resources during times of disaster. Having formal relationships and agreements in place minimizes the risk that your organization will end up at the bottom of long waiting lists created by excessive demand. Several days after late July's storms, Mike Collins of J.C. Restoration reported more than \$5 million in storm remediation requests.

Interim Service Providers – Anticipating temporary needs likely to arise during the interim between disaster response and restoration (e.g, waste disposal, enhanced security) enables proactive procurement of necessary temporary services.

Neighbors – Not only are neighbors often the first responders on a disaster scene, they can be an instrumental source of assistance. Mutual aid agreements can be negotiated in advance to create reciprocity for utilities, workspace, fixtures, and recovery amenities.

Insurer/Broker – Keeping insurance information secure will help maximize benefits and expedite claims. This information includes: policies and riders, coverage limits, deductibles, claims forms, filing information, and proof of ownership and value. Also, make/model/serial number and cost information for facility assets.

Architects/Building Engineers – The individuals who designed, constructed, and remodeled buildings and other facility fixtures often prove to be a repository of indispensable recovery information and support.

## **5. Know Your Plans**

OK, it's time to get back to that broken record and point out the indispensable value of up-to-date contingency plans, trained teams, regular reviews and updates, and verified strategies for preparation, response, recovery and resumption. Ensuring plans are kept in alignment with ongoing facility risk assessments and impact analyses is vital. Lastly, applications are available that enable teammates and managers to obtain, share and manage accurate plan information, track expenses, share communications, report progress, and create audit trails.

*MK Business Solutions Inc. was founded in 2004 by Marcia Kittler, a certified business continuity professional (CBCP) who is passionate about helping organizations and communities manage risk and improve economic security through enhanced preparedness and holistic resiliency.*

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