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Guidance for Rockford Area Businesses and Employers – COVID-19

(March 20, 2020)

* **COVID-19 Resources**
  + Local – Winnebago County Health Department - <http://www.wchd.org/>
  + State – Illinois Department of Public Health - <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/>
  + National – Centers for Disease Control - <https://www.cdc.gov/>
  + World – World Health Organization - <https://www.cdc.gov/>
* **Continuity Planning**  
  Identify staff members who can accurately assess how your company functions, both internally and externally. Determine which employees, materials, procedures and equipment are essential to keep the business operating and which functions are critical to survival and recovery. Include emergency payroll, expedited financial decision making and accounting systems to track and document costs in the event of an unexpected business incident and assign each task to a manager who will be responsible for that function for the duration of the event.
  + Establish procedures for succession of management including at least one person who is not at the company headquarters, if possible. Practice worst case scenario planning- it is very possible someone from your leadership team will be unavailable; plan for contingency if that person serves a critical role.
  + Decide which employees will be involved in pulling together your emergency business plan. Include co-workers from all levels in your organization as active members of the emergency management team; don’t overlook interns and new employees-they may recognize a vital function that could be overlooked. Consider a broad cross-section of employees but focus on employees with expertise vital to daily business functions.
* **Communications and Emergency Planning for Employees**Your employees are your most valuable asset.  Open lines of communication are essential before, during and after any incident. Include preparedness information and virus updates in newsletters, on company intranet, periodic employee emails and other internal communications tools. Consider setting up a password-protected page on the company website, an email alert or a call-in voice recording to communicate with employees throughout the incident. Designate an “800” number or conference line that can be used to communicate in the event of a quarantine with designated call times and personnel.
  + Crisis Communication Plan: Detail how your organization plans to communicate with employees, local authorities (identify point of contact for emergency services and first responders), customers and others for the duration of the event. Give employees information on how you will communicate when and how to report to work following the incident.
  + Make sure senior management has all relevant information and identify who will communicate updates to the public. Inform clients/customers if you anticipate delays in service (and communicate clearly how and when products will be delivered, or services rendered). It is also important to communicate with local, state and federal authorities what emergency assistance is needed for you to continue essential business activity.
  + If you are able to provide assistance to the community, communicate with officials and first responders what your company is prepared to do to help in the recovery effort.
  + Check with your IT provider to ensure key employees have the right tools to work remotely:
    - VPN Access (to access server)
    - Printer/Scanner/Fax or e-Fax
    - Monitor(s)
    - Keyboard and mouse
* **Key Customers**  
  Compile a list of your key customers and establish a plan to serve them for the duration. Since it is impossible at this time to know long that will be, plan for at least four to six months and identify priorities for each. It’s critical to communicate openly with your customers about the status of your operations, and what protective measures you’ve implemented.
* **Capital Access**  
  Determine your business's financial capacity to make payroll, maintain inventory and respond to market fluctuations. Prepare by exploring options with your local banking partner. In addition contact [www.rldc.us](http://www.rldc.us) or [SBA’s capital access resources](https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans).
* **Inventory and Supply Chain**Identify key suppliers, vendors, contractors, and any other businesses you must interact with on a daily basis. If there are any that serve a critical role, consider developing a professional relationship with more than one company in case they are compromised and cannot service your needs. It is prudent to ensure you have either adequate supplies of inventory for a sustained period and/or diversify your distributor sources in the event one supplier cannot meet an order request.
* **Facility Remediation/Clean-up Costs**  
  To enhance the protection of customers and staff, increase the frequency and intensity by which your business conducts cleaning of surfaces. Check your maintenance contracts and supplies of cleaning materials to ensure they can meet increases in demand.
* **Changing Market Demand**  
  There may be access controls or movement restrictions established which can impede your customers or suppliers from reaching your business. Plan accordingly.
* **Sales Calls, Meetings and Conferences**At this time, business leaders and management teams should consider postponing non-essential meetings and conferences. It is important to stay vigilant with updates; as we have seen, circumstances change quickly.
* **Travel**Management should use common sense for employees planning any travel and verify meetings/conferences or events have not been canceled prior to leaving. This is a good resource for updates: [**https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel**](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel). Also, if you or your employees must travel, trip insurance is recommended.
* **Facilities, Buildings, Property and Insurance**This is a good time to review your business insurance coverage and understand your deductibles, if applicable. Consider how you will pay creditors and employees. If you are the business owner or principal, you should also plan how you will provide for your own income. Finally, find out what records your insurance provider will want to see after an incident and store them in a safe place.
* Determine who will be in charge of the premises in the event you need to close suddenly. Consider the ways in which people, products, supplies and other things get into and leave your building or facility; make sure all entrances and exits are secure.  Identify machinery, computers, custom parts or other essential equipment needed to keep the business up and running – and what (if anything) needs to be moved in the event the building will be closed for any length of time.
* **Criminal Activity**  
  Cyber criminals usually kick into high gear during a crisis, emergency or other event. Remind employees to stay vigilant and delete any unsolicited “COVID-19” updates they receive – and never open any attachments.