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[This is part of a [special Disaster Planning section](#) from the November 2006 issue.]

Disasters can strike in many forms:

- Hurricanes
- Tornadoes
- Fire
- Flood
- Bird Flu
- Disgruntled Employees
- Server – computer crashes
- & others

How secure is your company? Really? Don't just think or hope; take the necessary steps to protect your data and your business. Every Accounting Firm should include the following in its Disaster Recovery Plan: (There is no particular order for this list — just things that all businesses should be doing to be prepared.)

1. Offsite backup for your most precious but unseen asset — your data!
Tape backups are not reliable.
2. Know your company functions. Determine which staff, materials, procedures and equipment are essential to keep your business running.
3. Know who your suppliers are as well as other businesses you interact with on a daily basis ... and know their plan in case of a disaster.
4. Have a list of your employees' phone numbers (work, home and cell).
Have a person in charge of contacting people during a disaster, so your people know the status of your operations. Create a telephone call tree.

5. Identify personnel who have physical disabilities, so proper arrangements

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or someone who will be in charge of creating a plan and looking up:

9. Post maps in your office on how employees should evacuate their buildings, and give two ways if possible.
10. Determine a location in your building that is the safest point to be in if evacuating isn't an option. Have the supplies in order to seal it, if necessary.
11. Create a website that is password protected so employees can get information about the business plans after a disaster. Have someone in charge of entering and managing this website info.
2. Know where the closest shelters are located and how you will get there before leaving your office.
3. Determine your policy for payroll before an emergency.
4. Secure important documentation that cannot be rebuilt.
5. Have remote access capability so employees can work from anywhere, anytime (high speed Internet needed).
6. Internal messaging service within an ASP environment will help during the bird flu if close contact with employees is not feasible. (MSN, AOL, etc. messaging services create a huge security hole).
7. Have an out-of-town telephone number where employees can call to give their status on individual and family situations.
8. Install anti-virus systems and keep them up to date. Firewall appliances (not software) are the first line of defense against unwelcome visitors to your network.
9. Use "strong" passwords (eight characters with upper and lower case as well as numbers) to protect your computers. Don't share your passwords. Change passwords every 30 days.
10. If you don't know from whom, what or where an e-mail came, don't open it!
11. Install smoke detectors and check them frequently.

2. Avoid close contact with people who are sick (bird flu). Wash your hands

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a statistic. Be Prepared. □

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