

Optimizing Disaster Planning

Prepare - Respond - Recover



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Here we are in the midst of another hurricane season with five major hurricanes predicted this season. (See <http://hurricane.atmos.colostate.edu/Forecasts/>.) As a manager at a plant, you certainly have a disaster plan in place, yet now is the time to review the plan. Hurricanes, storms and most floods typically come with advanced warning, which gives us time to prepare unlike other events, such as earthquakes or major industrial or transportation accidents that occur with no warning.

Fair warning gives all of us the opportunity to deliberately review the initial steps of our plans and to better prepare for the inevitable “off script” events that will follow. At Clean Harbors we use the Incident Command System (ICS) model for our own planning and we view disaster preparedness as a multiphase program that includes Preparedness, Response and Recovery. As hazmat responders and recovery specialists we also coordinate with our customers’ programs.

Typically, disaster plans are comprehensive reaction programs that, understandably, concentrate on the initial response phase. At the same time, we all understand that the other phases must be equally important if business continuity is the ultimate goal.

This short article is designed to help you optimize your plan while perhaps giving you something to circulate to your staff to get them thinking about their roles.

Preparedness

Using hurricanes as the example, preparedness picks up at the beginning of the season. Since plants are dynamic environments with constantly changing production, storage and equipment, plan reviews should be standard operating procedure. The reviews provide the opportunity to evaluate the effects of these equipment and production changes to the response plan since it was originally developed. Here are a few generic items that are occasionally overlooked. Your plan will certainly have more detailed operations that will significantly expand this list.



- ✓ New processes that have been introduced since the plan was developed. Do they require specialized responses, personnel or instructions to support vendors?
- ✓ Testing of all response equipment
- ✓ Changes to your staff’s personal situations that affect an individual’s ability to be available during a disaster (residential moves or changes in family situations)
- ✓ Updating contact information (with alternative means of contact) for all first responders and for all production and staff employees
- ✓ Reviewing recent staff reductions and turnover to be sure that they have not compromised your overall ability to respond
- ✓ Ensuring that all new staff have participated in tabletop rehearsals and/or workplace drills
- ✓ Recontacting all of your key response vendors to ensure that they have disaster contingency plans in place in the event that their plant or equipment are compromised
- ✓ Querying vendors on equipment/staff/services availability and making sure that their current management is familiar with your plan. This includes vendors that may be involved in the recovery phase only

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As you know, it is these seemingly minor details that can add complexity and uncertainty when disaster strikes.

Getting these reviews covered early sets you up for the second stage of preparedness when a hurricane or other disaster warning has been issued. You may not yet be sure of the storm's track but it is time to start implementing the plan.

Clean Harbors Disaster Preparedness Services for Plants

- ✓ Plan reviews
- ✓ Tabletop rehearsals
- ✓ Mock disaster/spill drills
- ✓ Standby emergency response agreements

Response

At this stage you are operating against the plan, pumping down sumps, or pressing up tanks, and doing the thousands of site preparation steps necessary to increase safety, ensure containment and minimize damage. Vendors are put on standby. Plant, vendor and rented equipment are pre-staged. Standby and first responder employees are put on notice and staff accommodations are prepared.

The immediate response phase is where the plan plays out. Presumably your plan anticipates most of the issues, giving you, your staff and vendors the flexibility to respond to unanticipated situations. As the initial response progresses and begins to wind down, there will be an evaluation step that prioritizes the most critical idled or damaged processes and assets in order to bring them back to production as soon as possible.

The entire organization – human resources, payroll, executive management – must be involved to make decisions and implement the extraordinary procedures that will expedite the return of normal operations.

Clean Harbors Disaster Response Services for Plants

- ✓ Sump, pit, drain pump outs
- ✓ Containment area pump outs
- ✓ Vacuum services
- ✓ Product transfer
- ✓ Emergency waste removal
- ✓ Standby services

Recovery

Recovery is the most prolonged and difficult phase. It also often requires complex project management and coordination of several service organizations. For major projects a (pre-arranged)

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restoration, remediation and reconstruction services firm is hired to oversee the project, which will include tank specialists, construction contractors, roofers, HVAC and trades specialists, surface oil and soil remediation specialists, mold mitigation specialists, cleaners, medical personnel, even exterminators.

This is also the phase that delivers on the promise of restoring production. After assessment, phased restarts of undamaged production processes can be scheduled. While the specialists focus on recovery, production personnel concentrate on bringing processes back on line. The recovery phase requires a constant redeployment of resources as the recovery progresses.

As this article indicates, disaster response starts with a comprehensive plan, but its effectiveness is based on its implementation. Assuming that the plan adequately addresses the potential disruption and damage, the difference between an acceptable and an outstanding outcome is the result of effective implementation of all three phases of the disaster program.

Clean Harbors Disaster Recovery Services



- ✓ Waste pad management
- ✓ Lab cleanouts and chemical packing
- ✓ Dock cleaning
- ✓ Boom management/decontamination
- ✓ Sludge and sediment removal from waste water and sewer systems
- ✓ Vacuum truck support services
- ✓ Drum and bulk waste disposal
- ✓ Container/rolloff supply
- ✓ Internal/external transportation

Contact Us

For additional information about Clean Harbors Disaster Response and Recovery Services contact your Clean Harbors representative or call our 24-hour Emergency Operations Center at 800.645.8265.



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