

**INSTITUTION WIDE BUSINESS CONTINUITY:  
INTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**

- PREPARED FOR –

**NYC ALLIANCE FOR RESPONSE FORUM - OCTOBER 27, 2004 - AFTERNOON PANEL  
BUSINESS CONTINUITY & DISASTER RECOVERY:  
BUILDING INTERNAL ALLIANCES AND EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS**

The American Museum of Natural History (“Museum”) has undertaken a facility-wide approach to business continuity planning for the institution. This effort has a number of parts. The Museum has an Emergency Management plan that lays out a program for mitigating the immediate effects of a disaster and securing the facility, staff, and visitors. Using the Emergency Management plan as a springboard, the Museum has developed a business continuity program with three elements which are all underway: an internal assessment of the business continuity preparedness of each department, an extended business continuity plan for the operations of the Museum to continue functioning in the long-term aftermath of a disaster, and disaster planning and risk assessment for the institution’s scientific collections from events, whether natural or man-made.

The Emergency Management plan has been in place for several years. The plan contains a program for the Museum’s immediate response to a disaster and thus serves as a stepping-stone for developing a full-scale business continuity plan. In fact, the plan has been tested in severe weather (such as hurricanes) and on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 as well. The facility-wide business continuity plan will cover all the essential steps required to keep the Museum running after a disaster.

**Methodology for Business Continuity Planning**

The Museum established a task force that included representatives from Collections, IT, Security, Safety, and Operations that completed the following steps in order to designate a scope for the institution’s business continuity planning.

- Consulted with internal experts including the heads of security, facilities, IT, and most of the science department heads who understand the unique aspects of their collections.
- Brought in and scheduled outside expertise for Business continuity awareness and training including, W. J. Smith, Belfor, Inc. and Dr. Rob Waller from the Canadian Museum of Nature.
- Benchmarked strategies and plans with outside institutions in the public sector e.g. Getty Museum, Smithsonian, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.
- Incorporated information from topical publications, two works in particular:
  - Building an Emergency Plan – A Guide for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions, by Valerie Dorge and Sharon L. Jones and published by the Getty Conservation Press, 1999.
  - Planning for Post-Business continuity and Reconstruction by Jim Schwab with Kenneth C. Topping, Charles C. Eadie, Robert E. Deyle, and Richard Smith and published by Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1998

**Three Phased Approach to Business Continuity Planning**

Based on input from the resources described above the task force developed a strategy for business continuity planning that has three main elements: **Assessment and Audit, Extended Business Continuity, and Risk Assessment and Disaster Planning for Scientific Collections.**

The goal of **Assessment and Audit** was to assess the current state of each of the Museum’s department’s business continuity planning and enhance the already existing Emergency Management plan. Key tasks included:

- Develop and administer a business continuity questionnaire to all departments of the Museum
- Compile and review all business continuity questionnaires
- Create a Critical Departmental Resources document

During the **Extended Business Continuity** planning the critical operations each department identified during the Assessment and Audit process were further evaluated and a more detailed process map and review of the resource

and staffing needs assessment of those operations was created with a detailed list of the types of risks to those operations, and a plan to maintain those operations throughout the aftermath of a disaster. The main tasks of this phase include:

- Establish the information technology requirements for near-term business continuity for each department's critical operations as laid out in the Assessment and Audit, and enhance as needed the plan to meet those requirements.
- Ensure that the plan has sufficient provisions for the back up of documents required to maintain each department's critical operations at alternate locations and summarize these documents in the business continuity plan.
- Identify alternative locations to maintain business continuity if needed
- Train key staff members on the business continuity plan and functions.

The goal of the **Risk Assessment and Disaster Planning for Scientific Collections** is to develop a comprehensive long-term approach to recovering the Museum's scientific collections from a disaster. The main tasks of this phase were divided into two groups, first an Asset Analysis and second a Response Procedure and Technique:

#### Asset Analysis

- Create a plan for the inventory of all collections and/or records.
- Assess coordination required with other departments (security, custodial, etc.)
- Determine risks of damage to collections from various events (structural, water, fire, haz. mat., etc.)
- Based on risk assessment set priorities for collections and/or records.

#### Response Procedure and Techniques

- Establish a list of potential safe areas, back up systems, and/or outside storage space
- Set guidelines for moving objects or data
- Stock emergency supplies and equipment
- Create fact sheets with routes and maps for consistent response
- Identify and implement appropriate staff training

#### **Summary of Business Continuity Planning**

The first phase of the Museum's strategy has been completed while the other two are currently underway. When completed the plan should be more than just a document to facilitate the salvage of the Museum's holdings after a disaster, our plan will build upon the already tested Emergency Management plan with a basic business continuity plan to get the institution up and running after the immediate threat has passed, and provide a long-term business continuity program for the institution and the scientific collections. The Museum is also in the process of bringing in outside expertise to critique and, if necessary, improve the planning and development process. Once all elements of the plan have been completed, the Museum will have a comprehensive plan for dealing with disasters natural or man-made, and more importantly, will have a highly motivated business continuity team with the training and tools to implement that plan effectively.

#### **For more information contact:**

Paul Schuchert  
Assistant Director of Operational Planning  
American Museum of Natural History  
Central Park West at 79<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, New York 10024  
212-769-5343  
pschuche@amnh.org