

THE THREE P'S OF Disaster Preparedness

How a group purchasing organization (GPO) can help your organization prepare and rebuild.

We live in a world where we're far more likely to worry about the present than the future. Your to-do list is getting longer each day, and it probably seems more productive to handle immediate, more pressing needs instead of sitting down to map out plans for events that may not even occur. But what happens when a catastrophe, major or minor, strikes your organization without warning and you aren't certain of how to proceed? Maybe you have an outdated disaster preparedness plan that doesn't quite reflect the scope of your organization, or maybe no one in your organization has taken the time to build out such a plan. If your organization doesn't have a clear path forward in the wake of a disaster, you're left to either resolve the crisis with the limited supplies you have available or make rash purchase decisions that might not be either timely or cost-effective.





20.4

Annual average number of disasters in the US resulting in +\$1B in damages

As of April 8, two [confirmed](#) weather or climate disasters with more than \$1 billion in losses have affected the United States in 2024. These two disasters resulted in the deaths of six people and had significant impacts on the economy. The annual average of disaster events resulting in \$1 billion in damages in the most recent 5 years is 20.4, meaning the United States can anticipate 18 or more major events to occur in the remainder of 2024. Such events could include droughts, hail, flooding, hurricanes, severe weather, tornadoes, wildfires, and winter storms, all of which can have devastating effects on the area they strike.

Aside from natural disasters, organizations operating out of physical facilities may also be

affected by more localized disasters like fires, pipes bursting, or structural failures. Organizations and the individuals involved with them could also be heavily impacted by issues like workplace injuries, equipment-related accidents, theft, violence, or costs from cybercrime damages, which alone are [predicted](#) to reach \$10.5 trillion by 2025.

To ensure that your organization is ready to face disasters, natural or otherwise, you must focus on the three p's: plan, prepare, and practice. Take time to work with stakeholders to develop and distribute a comprehensive plan, perform concrete actions to prepare the resources you need, and practice your plan regularly so that you can identify and implement any necessary adjustments.

PLANNING FOR A DISASTER



It's far more advisable for organizations to be proactive in their approach to disasters than reactive to ensure that an efficient strategy is in place. To appropriately [plan for disasters](#), your organization must develop policy and procedural documentation to guide disaster response. Considering the variety of disasters that can befall an organization, it's never too soon to assess your current disaster preparedness documentation to identify any necessary improvements.

If you're realizing that you don't have such documentation or are worried that the documentation you do have is insufficient, creating a formal emergency operations plan (EOP) is a great first step in your disaster preparedness journey. Before you jump into EOP creation, though, take time to determine the types of disasters (natural and otherwise) that could affect your processes and physical resources as well as your employees and community. Performing an emergency response risk assessment can help identify the emergency situations that may pose the most risk to your organization's unique environment.



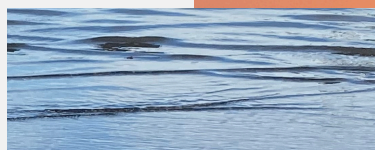
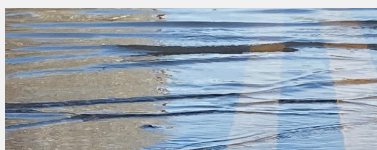
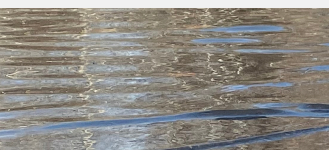
Designing Your First Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)

Successful disaster-related plans address your organization's internal needs first and encourage unity and coordination across a variety of stakeholders. There is no one "right" format for an EOP or strict requirements for what elements to include, though the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) does offer [planning guides](#) that you can download to get started. The important thing to ask of your EOP is whether it accurately reflects all facets of your organization and details processes for all stages of a disaster. For organizations taking their first stab at an EOP, FEMA [recommends](#) ensuring that the EOP is organized coherently, exhibits a logical progression between elements, remains consistent, can be adapted to unforeseen circumstances, and promotes coordination with stakeholders.

If your organization is just getting started with creating an EOP, consider outlining crisis communications plans, staff roles in a disaster, and supplier contacts. Crisis communications plans should be targeted at all relevant audiences like employees, customers, suppliers, management, and regulatory bodies and should include a robust contact list. For any staff members that are assigned a role, the role and its responsibilities should be communicated to those individuals in full. EOPs should also include information regarding data protection and backups, document protection, and insurance.

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PREPARING FOR A DISASTER



Your organization's ability to recover from a disaster tomorrow directly correlates with the [preparation you do today](#). Resources will likely be limited during or after a disaster occurs, especially for natural disasters, making it imperative for your organization to secure all possible recovery items before a disaster occurs.

The first step in preparing necessary resources is to determine the products and services your organization needs to address disasters. Whether your organization operates an application with sensitive information that needs to fail over to a disaster recovery zone in a major power outage, or you work for a municipal government that needs physical supplies to help the community recover after a weather event, it's in your best interest to identify everything you could need and connect with suppliers that can meet those needs.

Once you identify potential preparation materials and recovery/cleanup materials, contact your suppliers ahead of time and tell them what disaster response supplies you require. You should also work directly with these suppliers to assess whether the supplier has their own distribution network, uses their regular business structure to support disaster efforts, and can scale their communication and services based on disaster size. In addition, consider establishing disaster response performance expectations with your suppliers at pre-negotiated rates.



PRACTICING FOR A DISASTER

Your organization has people that are counting on you, whether you are a university with thousands of students, a [nonprofit organization](#) serving your community, a corporate business with remote and in-person employees, or a [property management company](#) with multiple buildings and residents. The safety of any individual person or community that is affected by your organization should be your first priority, and it's vital to practice your EOP to ensure that the documented methods of responding to disasters are actually effective.

Your EOP should be thoroughly reviewed on an annual basis. These reviews should accomplish two goals: reinforcing the mission-critical tasks that are defined in the plan and identifying and updating any gaps or outdated processes. In addition to reviewing the plan, your organization should also gather stakeholders annually to practice the plan and ensure that everyone is aware of their designated responsibilities.

Aside from training personnel on their roles, other [benefits](#) of testing your plan and conducting plan exercises include reinforcing knowledge of the plan, evaluating processes and team skills, ensuring compliance with relevant regulations, and promoting awareness of the emergency management program. Testing your EOP can [look like](#) discussion-based tabletop exercises, scenario-driven exercises in a simulated environment, or full-scale on-location exercises conducted by public agencies.

Another essential way to test your organization is by incorporating [proactive cybersecurity strategies](#) into your processes. Cyberattacks are ever on the rise, and penetration testing, adversary emulation, and red teaming are all methods that organizations can employ to identify areas of concern. If any vulnerabilities or areas for improvement are identified, take immediate action to secure your virtual environment and prevent malicious actors from breaking into your systems. In addition, consider conducting real-world tests of your organization's ability to prevent data compromise.



Group Purchasing as Your Catalyst for Successful Disaster Preparation

Preparing for disasters, and even recovering from disasters, is impossible without ensuring access to the right resources and solutions. Even if you have a set of trusted suppliers, ensuring that you are partnered with suppliers who can best meet your organization's needs and maintaining your relationships with those suppliers can be a lengthy and exhausting process. Partnering with a GPO connects your organization with a vast arsenal of suppliers. It means a second set of eyes on your plan, always being prepared with necessary supplies, and readily available suppliers and industry experts that can be involved with practice exercises.

PLANNING WITH A GPO

When you [partner with suppliers through a GPO](#), your dedicated GPO resource can also help you plan for disasters by reviewing and evaluating your EOP. Taking the time to define the disasters your organization will most likely face is an integral part of this process, since your GPO can work with you to determine what suppliers can most effectively aid you in a disaster. In addition, purchasing based on how your organization will respond to different scenarios eliminates wasted time if that scenario occurs.



The team of procurement experts at your GPO and the industry experts of their supplier network will ensure that your organization gets the information you need to feel confident that the products and solutions you have detailed in your plan will meet your budget and business goals, as well as the needs of your community.

When it comes to disaster-related supplies, it may seem like there are many suppliers that all have the same offerings, but factors like the supplier's location, costs of goods and services, and compliance with relevant requirements can all play into whether the supplier is a good choice for your organization. Connecting with suppliers through a GPO can help you verify that your suppliers will provide competitive prices and optimal lead times. In addition, incorporating compliant contracts into your EOP can relieve some of the uncertainty of sourcing materials and services.

PREPARING WITH A GPO

Using a GPO to partner with suppliers you trust also helps ensure that your organization is prepared with necessary supplies before a disaster strikes. The GPO model combines group spend with flexibility and agility, which increases organization savings and opportunities for innovation. Your GPO will help you avoid delays and other supply chain disruptions that may be caused by large scale disasters, and your organization will have immediate access to industry-leading suppliers who are experts in the disaster recovery space. No matter the disaster, you will have what you need when you need it.

A major benefit of leveraging a GPO as a part of your purchasing strategy is that you can reduce the overall cost of your supplies by ordering what you need in advance and taking the extra time to employ more budget-friendly options. Procurement experts at your GPO can identify strategic areas to save time and money, as well as optimizing spend management. And, if a disaster does occur, your GPO will partner with you to walk you through the steps of repairing.

One of the greatest value-adds of a GPO is the vast portfolio of solutions that your organization can pick from to rebuild and repair damaged property if a disaster occurs. Suppliers value a GPO's buying power, and GPOs have a supplier network that members can immediately start using when a need arises.

A GPO's network of suppliers should also include those that can fulfil urgent and large-

scale needs. Suppliers should be able to provide their services according to the extent of their buyers' disasters, and national suppliers can often pre-position resources in anticipation of a disaster. In addition, suppliers with their own network and the ability to move inventory will make the supplies you need more easily accessible. Larger suppliers can also provide valuable pre-incident expertise that buyers may not otherwise have access to.



PRACTICING WITH A GPO

If you or your team has not recently evaluated your EOP, or has just created a new one, walking through the plan and practicing each element should be an immediate priority. Having an EOP that accurately reflects what disasters you may experience can help your purchasing team and stakeholders respond as natural disasters approach or during the aftermath of an emergency.


One [function](#) of emergency preparedness exercises is to improve the ways in which internal and external teams, organizations, and other entities interact in a disaster. If you work with your GPO to get your suppliers involved with planned exercises, personnel from your organization and supplier organizations can discuss, or even simulate,

how supply needs would be met in a disaster. Practicing the EOP in this way is essential in demonstrating how and when supplies can reach disaster-impacted areas.

For many organizations that operate out of a physical office facility, equipment like fire extinguishers, sprinklers, generators, thermostats, water sensors, and other safety-related items are needed to mitigate risks stemming from [climate and weather events](#), [fires](#), and water damage. To minimize the damage to your building that can be caused by these and other similar events, work with trusted suppliers in your GPO's network to inspect your equipment and ensure that it can operate properly if a disaster strikes your organization or the surrounding community.

OMNIA Partners as Your Ally in Procurement

If you are searching for a GPO that can help you not only meet, but exceed your disaster preparedness needs, look no further than OMNIA Partners. OMNIA Partners is a GPO with an extensive supplier network and a [portfolio of contracts](#) that organizations can buy from. Your organization can [become a member](#) of OMNIA Partners today with no cost to participate and no order minimums.



[K-12](#), [higher education](#), [government](#), and [nonprofit](#) organizations that become members of OMNIA Partners buy off contracts that are competitively solicited and publicly awarded. These participating agencies benefit from huge cost savings and time savings, both of which are vital for organizations under strict budget constraints that may not have enough time or resources to research the most cost-effective options. Public and nonprofit agencies can also rest easy knowing that OMNIA Partners contracts are established in accordance with relevant regulatory requirements.

[Enterprise](#) and [corporate](#) organizations and [real estate](#) firms can also gain major benefits from OMNIA Partners contracts. OMNIA Partners works directly with suppliers to create contracts for member companies that also include added value and resources. Though your organization may not have to worry about selecting the most cost-effective option, you can see savings on products you would have bought either way and benefit from OMNIA Partners' full lifecycle management of your supplier relationships.

The OMNIA Partners portfolio contains both material and service offerings, and organizations can use OMNIA Partners contracts to purchase anything from life-saving [Automated External Defibrillators](#) (AEDs) devices to [anti-malware software solutions](#). Our disaster-related portfolio offerings include:

- Disaster Restoration of Operational Services
- Modular Buildings
- Portable Storage
- Electrical, Lighting & Data Communications
- MRO Supplies
- Equipment Rentals & Related Products
- Roofing Supplies & Services
- Risk Preparedness & Claims Recovery Services
- Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness Service
- Safety Equipment & Solutions
- Moving & Relocation Services
- Non-Disaster Restoration of Operational Services
- HVAC Products, Installation & Services
- Technology Products, Services & Solutions & more.

Save precious time and money and
**ensure the safety of
 your employees,**
 community, property, and the
 overall mission of your organization.



With OMNIA Partners, it is easy to find and purchase the disaster preparedness products and services you need at competitive prices. Researching and procuring products and services is now even easier with OMNIA Partners OPUS – the one-cart experience that enables all public sector agencies (private organizations coming soon!) to purchase vital supplies with a single click. Build your arsenal of disaster preparedness solutions with ease by [registering for OPUS](#) today!

All public and private members that buy through OMNIA Partners have access to a team of procurement experts that offer strategic sourcing and other consultative services, as well as rapid response teams with designated suppliers so that you can be confident in your disaster strategy. With OMNIA Partners, your organization also receives access to dedicated regional support that understands your buying needs and can ensure you are taking the right steps towards disaster preparedness.

In addition, [subject matter experts](#) (SMEs) in various spend categories are available to facilitate supplier conversations and build confidence that your organization will be well-equipped to handle disasters. Your organization can also leverage these SMEs to stay up to date on materials and technologies that will help secure your people and processes.

Don't wait for a disaster to strike to formalize a detailed EOP or start gathering disaster supplies. Create a comprehensive EOP that will instruct personnel on disaster response best practices, start gathering supplies in advance so you aren't blindsided by an emergency, and walk through each portion of your plan with relevant stakeholders to ensure that your response processes are sound. [Partner with OMNIA Partners](#) today to save precious time and money and ensure the safety of your employees, community, property, and the overall mission of your organization.



As your ally in the purchasing process, OMNIA Partners is dedicated to improving the way your organization identifies, evaluates, and procures what they need at the best value. With free membership, you'll gain immediate access to our portfolio of leading national suppliers as well as OPUS — our ecommerce platform where you can buy online and check product availability. Additionally, access to spend visibility, analytics, and guidance from subject matter experts collaboratively identify more strategic and efficient ways to procure. We are here to help you optimize procurement for your organization.

Discover a better way to buy at www.omniapartners.com
