



# Your Disaster Recovery Plan: **10 Things** to Consider

A guide for local and state governments





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## How Good Is Your Plan?

Disaster Recovery Planning is often an afterthought. For those Government entities that are fortunate enough to have a plan, many times it has been developed without the benefit of the perspective of a Disaster Recovery firm. ATI has helped thousands of Government clients prepare for and recover from disaster events. It is our hope that the information contained in this document is helpful in augmenting your Disaster Recovery planning and adequately prepares your team for the next emergency or disaster.

# Disaster Recovery Plans

Every disaster presents its own set of associated risks to your facilities and your team members. Many of these risks are posed by structures and their utilities, including electrical, gas, water, and fire sprinklers. As part of your Disaster Recovery plan, we recommend taking inventory of these systems, noting their locations, including instructions on how to shut them off following a disaster and adding contact information for relevant utility providers/contractors. This information will enable you and your Disaster Recovery provider to mitigate the risk of further damage.

Older buildings usually contain asbestos and lead, which can expose building occupants to hazardous materials following an event. We recommend that your Disaster Recovery plan include the most recent environmental surveys or clearances that have been provided for your buildings. We also recommend that you maintain a Safety Data Sheets (SDS) binder of known chemicals in your facilities with your plan. This will allow your Disaster Recovery provider to deal with your disaster more efficiently and safely.

Consider these 10 key issues when evaluating your existing Disaster Recovery Plan:

1. Large firm vs. small business
2. Your janitorial staff
3. Time is of the essence
4. Low cost vs. quality work
5. One size does not fit all
6. Self-performance vs. subcontracted labor
7. Hidden damage
8. Failing to plan
9. Misjudging the power of social media
10. Easy access



## KNOW YOUR RISKS

A good disaster recovery plan demonstrates an understanding of various natural and man-made disasters and their risks, includes:

- Heavy rain or snowfall
- Structure fires & wildfires
- Hailstorms
- Hurricanes/tornadoes
- Cold fronts/ice storms
- Earthquakes
- Mudslides
- Water main/pipe breaks
- Sewage spills
- Contagious disease outbreak
- Vandalism

## KNOW YOUR ROLES

The disaster recovery plan should establish various roles; everyone should know who is responsible for what.

## KNOW YOUR PRIORITIES

After a disaster, a major goal is to resume normal operations as quickly as possible. Consider how operational interruption can be minimized and determine which operations must be given exclusivity and priority.

## Key Issue #1

# Large Firm vs. Small Business

Many government agencies have set aside requirements to encourage the utilization of small businesses. We realize that these requirements often affect your choice of Disaster Recovery providers. While we support many small businesses throughout the U.S., major emergencies and disasters often present challenges for small companies. These challenges can impede their ability to respond quickly, staff the work and deal effectively with a myriad of environmental issues.

Small firms and franchises often have limited local resources and can be quickly overwhelmed. Their resources may be adequate for day-to-day events, but when dealing with a large-scale disaster or widespread emergency storm event, small teams can quickly find themselves understaffed. With multiple emergencies occurring at once, small firms and franchises may not be able to respond at all.

For larger emergency and disaster events, larger firms with scalability are critical. With more resources readily available at their disposal, larger Disaster Recovery firms will:

- Implement a quick response and recovery plan
- Limit operational interruption
- Contain and mitigate environmental, toxic or biological exposures
- Be in full compliance with regulations to avoid unnecessary fines and penalties
- Safeguard all stakeholders from potential illness or injury

When identifying your Disaster Recovery Team of internal and external stakeholders, be sure to include one or more large Disaster Recovery providers. This will ensure that you are adequately prepared if an emergency or disaster occurs.



Government settings include:

- Commercial
- Correctional
- Courthouses
- Educational
- Fire and law enforcement
- Healthcare
- Historical structures
- Housing
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Parks and recreation
- Public works

## Key Issue #2

# Your Janitorial Staff

For some government agencies, the janitorial staff is the first line of defense when emergencies or disasters occur and can be effective for smaller emergencies. You likely have a reliable janitorial staff in place, but chances are, they are not adequately trained to deal with larger emergency or disaster events. Following a disaster event, your janitorial staff will not have the scale, capacity, equipment or necessary training required to carry out proficient and time-sensitive disaster recovery and abatement.

Environmental exposures must be managed properly. Post-disaster cleanup will most likely involve the handling of health-threatening hazardous materials such as mold, asbestos, lead and biological contaminants. Regulations require that only properly trained personnel deal with these contaminants.

An experienced Disaster Recovery firm, with abatement capabilities, will take the proper precautions, including setting up containment zones and restricting access by unauthorized persons. These precautions will prevent the risk of injury or illness from environmental exposures. It is important that you choose a Disaster Recovery provider that can deal with environmental issues as they are encountered. In addition to protecting life and property, they will ensure that your recovery project is handled in accordance with all relevant rules and regulations.

**The inability to properly manage contaminants and hazardous materials can result in serious illness or injury.**



Hazardous materials include anything that may cause health problems, including:

- Mold and other fungi
- Asbestos, ash and other lung irritants
- Lead, mercury and other toxic heavy metals
- Flood zones and sewage
- Radioactive substances
- Natural gas leaks

### Key Issue #3

## Time Is of the Essence

In a crisis situation, time is critical. The biggest variable in assessing total cost and the success of a project is the timeliness of response. Business interruption signals a potential loss to operational services. Capacity to work 24/7 and weekends should be part of your evaluation criteria when selecting a Disaster Recovery partner, as well as strong vendor relationships and domain expertise. For example, with a flood/ sewage disaster, immediate mitigation can save up to 40 percent in preventable secondary damages (i.e., mold growth) and higher costs. As discussed above, including an inventory of utilities in your plan will facilitate the efforts of your Disaster Recovery provider.



## Key Issue #4

# Low Cost vs. Quality Work

Low cost does not always mean value. While cost and budget concerns dictate most management decisions, settling on the lowest bid can end up becoming a costly mistake. For example, by using specialized drying techniques, an experienced contractor can salvage damaged items that would otherwise be expensive to replace, such as wood flooring. Improper or incomplete drying performed by inexperienced vendors can lead to a greater loss of building materials and severe secondary damages. Opting for a quick fix may initially seem like a good idea; however, when accompanied with mid-project change orders, poor craftsmanship, and possibly building code and permit violations, your recovery project faces unnecessary delays. Be sure to choose wisely when vetting prospective emergency service contractors.



## PRO TIP

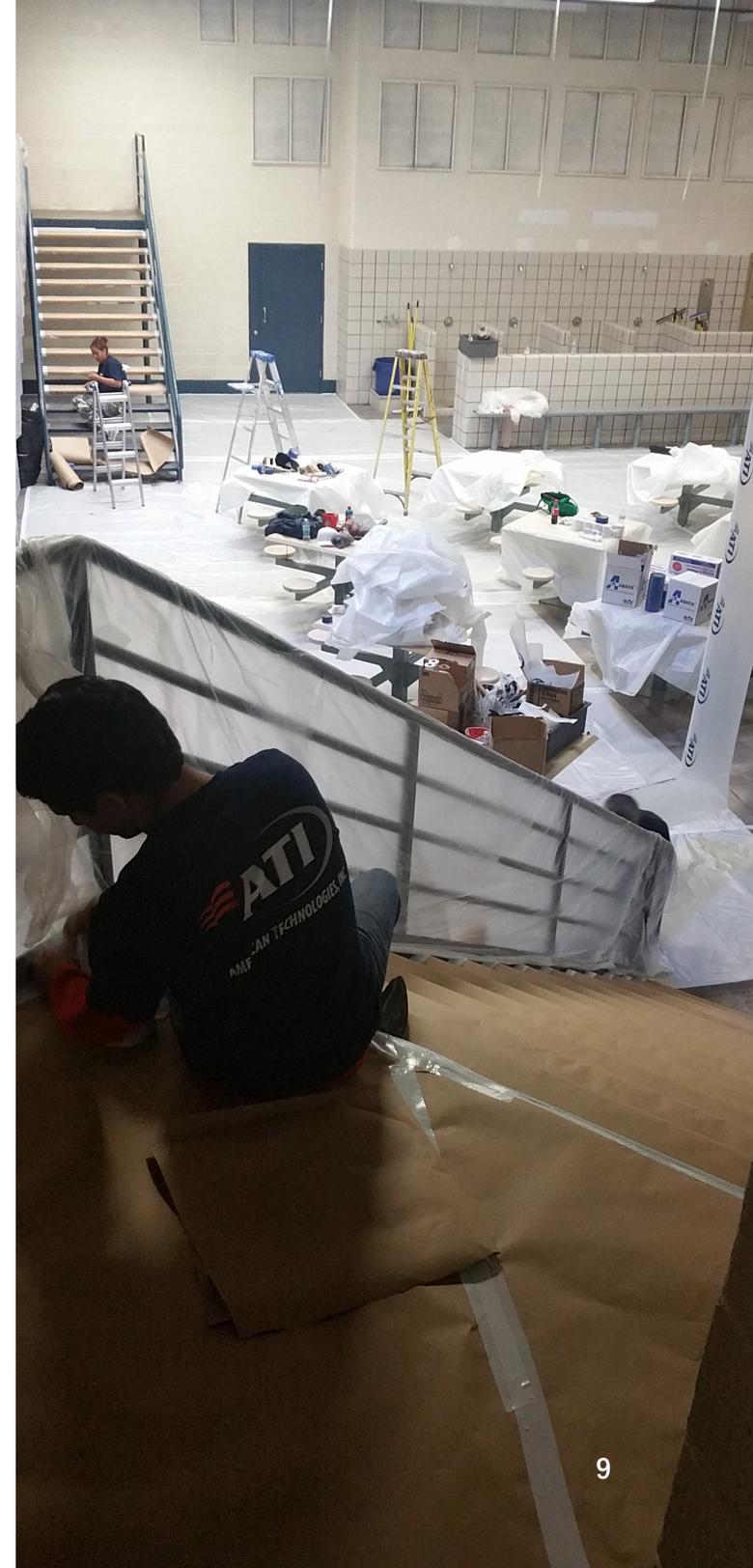
When selecting a Disaster Recovery team, check the following:

- References and reviews
- Comprehensive training
- Professional-class certifications (IICRC, WRT, ASD, AMRT, CCT FSRT)
- Capacity for large-scale cleanups
- Experience with toxic materials
- Range of Catastrophe Response Team (CAT) services

## Key Issue #5

# One Size Does Not Fit All

Relying on the same process for every type of damage may lead to cost overruns, safety issues and certain delays. Depending on the nature of the loss and damage, many disaster recovery plans require as many varying strategies as there are emergencies. Well-established Disaster Recovery firms plot a specific course of action with corresponding timelines for completion specific to the type of disaster. For example, mold remediation and fire damage cleanup are both complex yet demand different processes.



## Key Issue #6

# Self-performance vs. Subcontracted Labor

While outsourcing services is sometimes practiced by Disaster Recovery contractors, the mismanagement of outsourced resources and personnel can lead to poor results. Outsourcing can complicate projects and present issues such as last-minute subcontractor approval processes, communication delays, privacy concerns, and confusion. When evaluating potential Disaster Recovery contractors, determine if they are able to handle anticipated workloads without the need to recruit third parties.



## Key Issue #7

# Hidden Damage

From standard moisture readings after a flood to inspections of building materials for contaminants, testing is a key aspect of abatement best practices. There are many situations in which testing needs to be performed. After a water intrusion, thermal imaging cameras and moisture meters are used to determine the impact of the water damage and act as guides for the dry-out process.

However, for environmental hazards (mold, contaminants, bacteria), testing must be performed by an Industrial Hygienist (IH). This prevents any conflict of interest from an abatement contractor self-performing tests. Pre-qualifying and hiring an independent IH also allows for a direct billing process, bypassing any mark-up from a third party. It creates a clear separation of roles between the IH and the disaster recovery contractor.



## Key Issue #8

# Failing to Plan

Proactively maintaining and fortifying vendor relationships before a disaster strikes is key to a successful Disaster Recovery plan. Take the time to learn about the costs and the range of available resources and services. Understanding the process upfront will help prevent unwelcome surprises. Review and update your Disaster or Business Continuity plan regularly. Ensure all vendor approvals and necessary documents (insurance, W-9, work authorizations, and after-hours contacts) are current.

Part of your Disaster Recovery plan should include a Property Overview that addresses:

- Year facility was constructed
- Date and areas of renovations
- Blueprints for structures
- Location and names of tenants
- Primary use and square footages of floors
- Flooring types

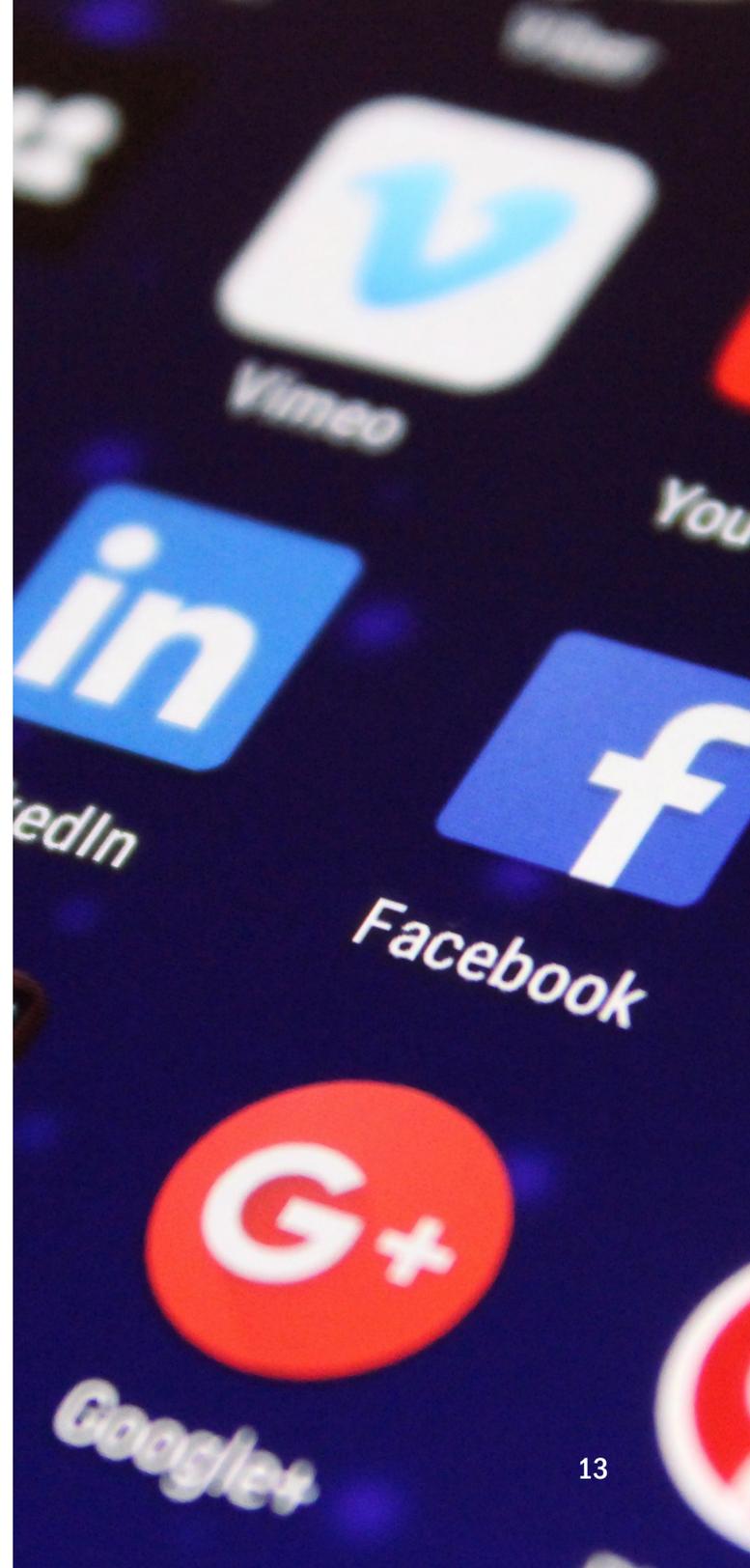
These and other details will assist your Disaster Recover provider in helping you to restore your facility to normal operations expeditiously. ATI offers disaster preparedness assessments and trainings and can assist you with your plan.



## Key Issue #9

# Misjudging the Power of Social Media

Disasters can be a scary and traumatic experience for everyone involved. It is imperative to align yourself with a Disaster Recovery contractor that strives to put your employees' best interests first, responding with genuine concern and compassion. If employees sense a lack of transparency or feel that their concerns are being ignored, it could lead to a barrage of harmful posts on a social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. It is best to use social media proactively to document the successful progress of your Disaster Recovery efforts, keeping employees and all related parties regularly informed.



## Key Issue #10

# Easy Access

While large-scale disasters will most likely be covered by an insurer, damage that falls within the deductible threshold will need to be contracted by you. It is important to select a Disaster Recovery provider that is respected by insurance companies and adjusters and can also provide contractual options for easy procurement access. ATI's Government team is well-versed in the public sector and can readily provide our Government clients with a variety of contracts and cooperative purchasing options to facilitate access to our Disaster Recovery services.





## About American Technologies, Inc.

Established in 1989 by Gary Moore, American Technologies, Inc., is the nation's largest family-owned and operated restoration contractor. Headquartered in Anaheim, Calif., the company specializes in restoration, environmental and reconstruction services following natural and man-made disasters with an unwavering commitment to customer service. To learn more, visit [ATRestoration.com](http://ATRestoration.com) or call (833) 400-0056.



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