

Business Continuity Activation Checklist

Print this and keep it with your offline plan. Work top to bottom. It is designed to be used under pressure.

The goal in the first hours is not to fix everything. It is to keep people safe, protect priority services, and reach minimum viable operations. Restoring everything comes later.

First 15 minutes — safety and control

- ☐ Account for everyone's safety. For a life-safety emergency, call 999 first.
- ☐ Start a log with the current time. Every action and decision from here gets a timestamp.
- ☐ Establish what has happened and what capability is affected (people, premises, technology, comms, data, suppliers, utilities, equipment).
- ☐ Decide whether to activate the plan (partial or full) and who is authorising it.
- ☐ Notify the continuity lead and get the right people connected, using safe communications if normal channels are affected.

First hour — command and priorities

- ☐ Confirm command roles: continuity lead, operations, technical, people, communications, facilities, recorder.
- ☐ Confirm which priority services are affected and their target recovery times (from the BIA).
- ☐ Agree what minimum viable operations look like right now.
- ☐ Tell staff what to do and not do, and where updates will come from.
- ☐ Trigger the relevant scenario playbook (premises, internet, cloud, power, supplier, staff, IT).
- ☐ Notify insurer / key suppliers / landlord as required.
- ☐ Set an update cadence (for example every 30-60 minutes) and record the next decision point.

First four hours — keep priority services going

- ☐ Stand up manual workarounds for affected priority activities, and note what will need reconciling later.
- ☐ Confirm alternative premises, connectivity or communications are working as planned.
- ☐ Communicate a factual holding message to affected customers.
- ☐ Escalate supplier or provider issues against their SLA.
- ☐ Confirm you can reach the continuity plan and vital records even if normal systems are down.
- ☐ Check on staff welfare; rotate people if the disruption will be extended.

First business day — stabilise and plan recovery

- ☐ Confirm you have reached minimum viable operations, or the plan to get there.
- ☐ Set the recovery order for full restoration (identity, network, data, then applications).
- ☐ Update staff, customers and management with a clear situation report.
- ☐ Begin planning the return to normal, including the backlog of orders, invoicing, queries and reconciliation.
- ☐ Keep logging decisions and their reasons for the post-incident review.

Management should be able to answer: what are our priority services, what is our minimum viable operation, is it running, who has authority, how are we communicating, and what is the next decision point? Full guide: systemforce.co.uk/blog/2026/08/26/business-continuity-plan-template-uk/