

Step by Step Workbook

To Prepare your Pharmacy for a Disaster or other Emergency

Be Prepared

“A Scout must prepare by previously thinking out and practising how to act on any accident or emergency so that he is never taken by surprise.”

Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Scouting movement.

This document will assist with disaster planning, emergency response management and business continuity for community pharmacies. It does not attempt to identify or plan for every eventuality, nor replace independent thinking or decision making. However, the resultant plan will be a reference to provide a prompt for action and a summary of priorities and resource requirements that can be adapted to manage any disruption of service.

This work book has been written to guide you through the process of preparing an emergency response and business continuity plan for your pharmacy. It starts with the easiest and most important things to do then encourages you to continue the process to complete a plan that will be invaluable should the need for it ever arise. The template gives you the skeleton of a document on which you can record your plan.

Getting Started

1. Decide that you do need to do this – to develop a plan for the protection of yourself, your staff and customers, and for the future viability of your business should disaster strike. It is also a requirement of your Community Pharmacy Services Agreement.
2. Appoint a staff member to work with you to help with documentation, follow up actions etc. A problem shared is a problem halved!
3. Set up a new folder in your computer to keep all your emergency management files in and begin by putting in it the “Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan” file name *Pharmacy emergency response plan template.doc*. This provides a template to document your plan. Because this file is “read only”, start by filling in the name and address of your pharmacy on pages 1 and 2 then “Save As” – changing the file name to remove the word “template” and replace it with the name of your pharmacy. Remember to save future additions and changes to this new file and to keep a back-up of it offsite.

Important Things First

4. Prepare an evacuation plan for your pharmacy and record it in Section C of your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan document. Consider:
 - what electrical or gas appliances should be turned off if possible e.g. heating elements, hot water jug
 - what to grab if possible e.g. mobile phone, wallet, keys and coat
 - where to assemble. Choose a place safe from falling debris and other hazards. After an earthquake it may be safer to stay indoors (after the drop, cover and hold procedure) until a safe exit and meeting point has been found – unless the building shows obvious signs of damage or if there is an immediate tsunami risk.
 - who will take command of the situation?
5. Display a copy of the evacuation plan where all staff can read and be familiar with e.g. in the staff room and on the back of the bathroom door.

6. Prepare an emergency resource pack of items necessary in an emergency, but not normally stocked in your pharmacy, and record its contents in Section B of your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan document and check every 6 months. Include:

- effective torches and batteries (if not self-powered) and/or light sticks. Make sure they are stored close to the floor where you can find them in the dark!
- a first aid kit that includes sufficient wound dressing packs, bandages, slings etc
- drinking water and food. Include "comfort food" e.g. chocolate!
- a battery powered radio and in-car chargers for mobile phones
- strong plastic bags with ties to use as an emergency toilet
- hand sanitiser
- a portable gas cooker, fuel, lighter and pot or billy
- a camera or phone camera to record damage for insurance purposes
- protective gloves for handling rubble and broken glass. Additional tools maybe
- walking shoes and coats for staff who may have to walk home.

Consider also having a laptop computer loaded with both shop and dispensing programmes, an extra (daily) backup, and important patient files of methadone, clozapine and weekly close control dispensing data.

7. Obtain from all staff (including part-time and temporary staff) their contact details and those of their ICE (In Case of Emergency) contacts. Record details in Section B of your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan. Ask all staff for their permission for senior staff to keep a record of their mobile number on their own phone. A 'cascade tree' could be considered for passing messages rapidly among staff.

8. Make diary entries to check and update the staff contacts list at the beginning of every month.

9. Clearly label all escape exits and important safety switches in the pharmacy e.g. electricity, gas and water main switches/taps. Ensure all staff know where to find them in an emergency. Document in Section B of your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan. Include a floor plan sketch that identifies the evacuation routes and assembly area, the location of utility shut off switches, fire extinguishers, first aid supplies and emergency equipment.

10. Review your staff induction information sheet and incorporate disaster response and evacuation information.

11. Encourage all staff to prepare their own comprehensive family plan, including how and where they will meet during and after a disaster. See back of the Yellow Pages and the Household Emergency Plan template on the Civil Defence Get Thru website – <http://www.getthru.govt.nz/how-to-get-ready/household-emergency-plan/>.

Contacts and Assets

12. Prepare a list of business contacts, your account number / reference and their phone and email details. Record in Section B of your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan. Remember that speed dial won't work on your portable phone when the power fails. Consider having a secure record of important alarm, computer and website passwords.

13. Make diary entries to review and update the business contacts list every six months – maybe straight after you do the CD register check! When you do your monthly staff contacts check, it would be wise to also record any business contacts you are aware of that changed during the previous month.

14. Record details of key items of equipment, including model, serial number and date of purchase. Photograph them for replacement and insurance purposes. Record in the Asset Register in Section B of your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan. Review and update every six months.

15. Consider video filming the pharmacy and its contents. This doesn't need to be a Peter Jackson production, but can be a very helpful record and aide-memoire when describing losses in a later insurance claim. Store it safely off-site.

Identify Your Risks

16. Gather key staff together to brain storm potential hazards and risks to the pharmacy and the business, and to suggest ways to prevent or mitigate (lessen) the damage they may cause. In other words, discuss what could go wrong and how you could prevent it happening; and if it does happen, how you could minimise its effect. Maybe do this after work over a pizza or two.

Record in Section A of your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan the risks, the likelihood of them occurring and your mitigation strategy for each of them. Appendix 1 contains examples of environmental, facility and business risks and mitigation suggestions that will help you get started. Doing this is a very important part of your preparedness. It isn't easy to do but must be done thoroughly. The examples in Appendix 1 are just a beginning; with a bit of thought you will identify many more likely risks to your particular pharmacy and business, and have ideas of what you could do to minimise the impact of each. Maybe there are alternatives to avoid particular risks, and if so what would you have to do to make them work? The first few Civil Defence reference resources in Appendix 3 will be useful, particularly the "Hazard Assessment for Business" and "Planning and Preparedness for Business".

Employers have an obligation under the Health and Safety in Employment legislation to ensure they have an effective method in place that will identify risks of serious harm to employees and to take all practicable steps to protect them and other potentially affected parties so there is a safe working environment.

17. Share your risk list with other staff, local pharmacists, local GPs, friends and family for their comments and additions. In particular, discuss shared plans with your local GPs – in the event of an emergency you are going to have to help each other. You may even have to share premises and facilities so now is the time to make contact and set up a memorandum of understanding for mutual support, see Appendix 2.

18. Encourage your patients to always obtain renewal prescriptions and repeats a week before they run out so they always have a few days' supply on hand should pharmacy services be disrupted.

19. Go through your list of business contacts and consider the likely problems for which you might have to call them, and what further problems you might have if they cannot help you. Document these risks in Section A of your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan and decide what you can do either now or at the time that would help mitigate them.

20. Carefully review your business insurance policy with your insurer. Does it provide satisfactorily for:

- replacement of damaged stock
- staff wages (and your own) for at least 6 months (preferably 12 months)
- replacement of damaged computer system and other essential equipment
- the cost to lease, transfer to and set up in an alternative location
- business interruption costs such as the hire and running costs of a generator, portaloos, water storage tank

- potential loss of business and profit consequent to the disaster, including delays in rebuilding and the forced movement of patients and doctors away from your locality
- repair and refit of the premises?

Put a copy of the insurance policy with your emergency response plan and on your emergency USB flashdrive.

21. Check your lease agreement to see what your obligations are and what your landlord's obligations are in terms of your lease. Is there an exit clause if you cannot access the building?

22. If falling equipment and items on shelf were risks identified in your list of potential hazards, then secure shelving and heavy equipment and prevent medicines and other stock from falling by putting fishing line or string along the front of shelves. Put heavy and hazardous items on lower shelves. Review drawers and cupboard doors, consider seismic latches.

Essential Utilities

23. Check the services that would need to run off a generator (e.g. lights, computers, fridge, fax) and have an electrician determine your power and cabling requirements. Purchase or discuss with a hire company the appropriate model needed. Maybe install a socket to route power into the building from a large generator – check first with landlord if building is leased and with electrician to ensure an isolation switch is incorporated in the circuit to prevent backflow into the grid.

24. Install or determine the specifications and potential source of a water storage tank for dispensary and staff washing purposes. This water may have to be boiled before use in internal medicines e.g. methadone dispensing and administration, if bottled water supply is exhausted.

25. Review your computer systems' vulnerability.

Back up your computer daily and keep it off-site. "Cloud" storage is recommended e.g. nexusdata.co.nz or keepitsafe.co.nz.

Have additional hard backups done weekly or monthly (i.e. to USB or an external hard drive) and keep them in a safe place off-site.

Test and validate your backup process to confirm the backup is capable of restoring your system and data.

Have a record of the precise hardware requirements necessary to reinstate your system and keep software discs in a safe place together with their registration numbers/codes.

Find out how long it will take to replace and connect computer hardware, whether in the pharmacy or at a new location.

Find out how long it will take to setup and enter backup data, test and resume dispensing service. A supply of pharmacy labels kept off-site might be useful if you resume dispensing at a different location.

Record important information as an appendix to your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan.

26. Document in an appendix a paper-based system for dispensing without a computer. Ensure you have sufficient pen and paper resources to operate this system until computer services resume.

27. Review your EFTPOS vulnerability.

Can you access an app that allows payments to be made through a mobile phone?

Document as an appendix a manual system for credit card purchases and train staff in it. Have sufficient forms available.

Document as an appendix a paper-based credit / IOU policy for if cash facilities are not available. A portable calculator could be helpful!

Work Together

28. Join, or form, a Primary Care LEG (Local Emergency Group) of neighbouring general practices and pharmacies. These may be represented by a sector co-ordinator at an EOC (Emergency Operations Centre), usually a health EOC at either a PHO or the DHB. A LEG is designed to help primary healthcare help itself by working together in the first chaotic day or two, and after that point to enable resources and outside assistance to be sent where they are needed most. Develop key relationships and get to know the people you will have to work with. Make sure you know how and where to contact your LEG and EOC and that they know how to contact you by e-mail, phone, fax or runner/cyclist.

29. Read section G5.6 of the Community Pharmacy Services Agreement titled “Health Emergency Planning” and determine where your pharmacy fits within your district or regional health emergency plan.

30. Document in Section B of your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan the requirements of an alternative building that could be used if you have to relocate. Investigate the suitability of possible buildings nearby e.g. a local medical practice or pharmacy, another shop currently unoccupied, or an on-site container. Set up a memorandum of understanding for mutual support, see Appendix 2. Consider the minimum hygiene, safety and security requirements of a licence to operate a pharmacy from temporary premises. You may need to separate your retail and dispensary activities. If you do have to relocate you must apply to the Medicines Control section of the Ministry of Health for a new Licence to Operate a Pharmacy and comply with the requirements of an initial licensing audit. Some flexibility is possible if a national or local state of emergency is declared.

Plan your Response

31. Review the “Action List for the Person Activating the Emergency Response Plan” in Section C of your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan. Add more activities specific to your pharmacy that you think should be included.

32. Print at least 10 Situation Report forms from Section C that you have pre-populated with the pharmacy name and address, phone, fax and e-mail details. It is extremely important that your LEG, PHO or DHB knows how operational your pharmacy is and what your problems are so they can a) report to their controlling organisation and b) co-ordinate help for you. The regular Situation Reports (sitreps) you send are essential during the response phase of an emergency.

33. Document the contact details of agencies likely to assist you during an emergency. List them in Section C of your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan.

34. Prepare strategies to inform your patients and customers of changes to your service e.g. have a sandwich display board available together with cardboard, tape and large felt tip pens. Put an automated phone message on your pharmacy phone and/or redirect messages to another phone line or to your mobile. Consider using Facebook and other social media such as Twitter and text alerts.

35. Plan for methadone and other patients requiring daily dispensing. Consider access issues (for you and for them), a shortage of the medicine and bottles to dispense in, difficulty in obtaining prescriptions and other documentation. Discuss with methadone clinic team and document as an appendix. Consider keeping up-to-date patient files on a laptop or USB flashdrive together with dispensing data of methadone, clozapine and weekly close control dispensings. Ensure this information is stored appropriately and securely.

Plan Your Recovery

36. Think about the equipment and resources that will be essential for the future of your pharmacy so that if the building is damaged and access restricted but you are given permission to briefly enter, you know what to rescue first. List them in Section C of your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan.

37. Plan for recovery by detailing a business continuity plan in Section D of your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan. It is unrealistic to develop a complex plan from scratch in the heat of an emergency; a well prepared plan allows you to have a range of responses in place to be activated as soon as they are needed.

Tidy Up

38. Incorporate the additional subsections and appendices you have created, and add page numbers to the contents page of your plan.

39. It might be a good idea now to find someone with good word processor computer skills to review what you have prepared and if necessary improve the layout so the information is easily read and understood.

40. Put paper copies of your plan with your pharmacy SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) folder, and with your emergency kit, and an electronic copy off-site, on your emergency laptop and on an accessible USB flashdrive e.g. with the pharmacy keys.

41. Make diary notes to review and re-date your Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan every 12 months. Keep it current – you never know when you might need it! When updates are made change the date prepared on the first page of your plan and ensure all paper and electronic copies are updated also.

Implement, Train and Test

42. Ensure that you and/or the Pharmacy Manager are aware of and undertake the responsibilities to prepare for an emergency as detailed in Section B of the Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan.

43. Ensure all staff likely to act as Charge Pharmacist are aware of the Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan and understand their responsibilities as the initial Incident Manager should any emergency occur.

44. Explain, discuss and test the pharmacy's Emergency Response and Business Continuity plan with all staff. Remember the four Rs of emergency management planning:

REDUCTION – recognition of hazards and risks, and mitigation to avoid or minimise their impact prior to the event

READINESS – planning, establishing response systems, training and maintaining readiness to respond

RESPONSE – mobilising and activating the Emergency Plan

RECOVERY – actions to recover and return to business as usual, and to review the Plan in light of the experience.

Final Thoughts

45. Return to page 1 of the template document. Does your plan:
- address the most likely hazards that could affect the routine operation of your pharmacy
 - provide a framework to coordinate your pharmacy's response to the emergency
 - identify the essential services, resources, facilities and alternative arrangements required to continue providing the best possible service
 - guide the restoration of normal services?
46. Make contact with a buddy, a pharmacist living in another geographical area who could come to your aid in an emergency. This is the person, maybe a Pharmacy School friend, who in time of need during and after an emergency would make it their responsibility to support you and help wherever he or she could. This could be to turn up with resources, or be a pair of hands to help clean up, or to relieve you of dispensing activities while you get things sorted, or later to offer respite care to you and your staff. In other words, to be proactive and support their mate – as you would do for him or her.
47. During regular staff meetings include a short section of “what ifs” and have staff discuss possible responses. What if water suddenly started pouring from the ceiling what would you do? As Lord Baden-Powell said, prepare by thinking about and practising how to act on any accident or emergency so that you are never taken by surprise.

This workbook was prepared in April 2014 by Euan Galloway for the Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand, assisted by Barry Simpson (Central Region Primary Health Emergency Planner) and John Coleman (South Island PHO Emergency Planning Co-ordinator) and pharmacists Karen Kennedy and Jacqui Lawson from the Canterbury Primary Response Group.

Feedback is welcomed with suggestions and examples to improve this document and the accompanying template. Send to the Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand, PO Box 11-640, Wellington 6142 or e-mail p.society@psnz.org.nz.