

Building Business Resiliency: Property

This article is the second in a series on business resiliency. We're covering what resiliency looks like in and for a business' people, property, product and planet, and how you can use scenario planning to prepare your business for whatever comes next.

Companies of all kinds reimaged their workplaces this year. Offices, manufacturing facilities, construction sites and more were rethought and redesigned for social distancing. COVID-19 isn't the only catastrophe you'll want your property to be ready for, though. To be truly resilient, your facilities need to be a major part of your business continuity plan.

Knowing where to go, though, starts with knowing where you are.

A **Gemba Walk** is a tool usually used for finding opportunities for process improvement. Company employees, usually on the management team, take a walk around the production floor to simply observe. They look for anything that seems inefficient.

Make this tool more effective by asking employees from all disciplines of your company to go on Gemba Walks. By getting different perspectives on anything that looks unsafe or "off," you'll better spot potential safety issues before they materialize. Those conducting the walks can chat with your employees and take the temperature of your workforce, too. If a safety hazard is present, your employees can tell you right then and there.

Many companies don't have adequate inspection processes in place, and overlooked hazards cause preventable accidents when a crisis hits. Remember: *if you're not looking, you're not seeing*. The moment your fire alarm goes off is not the time to learn that your fire pump valves were shut off, or your doors are blocked by pallets of product, or you don't have a way to know if all your employees made it out. Make sure your inspection process is outlined, documented, and reported to top management. Then make sure your team is following through.

After assessing your current situation, you can build safeguards in your facilities. Make sure you have the right equipment to make quick structural modifications. Keep your maintenance team informed so they can respond to accidents, natural disasters, health hazards and more. Adhere to a disciplined preventative maintenance mindset. You want a workplace that can and will adapt to the needs of the moment.

Don't be afraid to think outside the box, too. So many companies bought Plexiglas barriers to protect employees from COVID-19 that it drove prices up and significantly limited its availability in some places. There are other materials you can use to separate employees. We've seen successful implementation of barriers made from plants, bookcases, cabinets, etc. These types of barriers can effectively redirect traffic while still looking nice. Some manufacturing facilities have also seen success with mobile barriers – devices employees can take with them as they move around the floor.

Adaptable companies are housed in adaptable properties – and in many cases, getting your employees safely back into your production facility could be the key to getting your business back up and running. Functioning well in the midst of a catastrophe could give you a leg up in your industry, and can give your employees a sense of normalcy in times that feel anything but normal.

Having the proper insurance in place is key, too. Work with your agent or broker to make sure your financial risk management efforts are up to par with your physical risk management efforts. A good policy can help you rebuild after a disaster, with as little interruption to your operations as possible. Give us a call at 800-268-1830 to learn more.