

RECOVERY FACILITIES

The results of Continuity
Central's global survey into
recovery facility usage.



<http://www.continuitycentral.com>

Recovery facilities: how far is far enough?

From a business continuity point of view, one of the major lessons learned from 9/11 was that, in a wide area disaster, having your business continuity recovery facilities located too close to your company premises means that both locations could be caught up in the same crisis.

In the weeks following the second anniversary of the September 11th attacks Continuity Central conducted a global survey into recovery facility usage to determine what benchmarks there may be for recovery facility location and what plans companies have to change their recovery facility usage. Almost 150 people responded to a detailed questionnaire and the results make interesting reading:

Do you include the use of a recovery facility in your business continuity plans?

This was the first question asked, and unsurprisingly given the profile of Continuity Central users, the vast majority of respondents, 91.5 percent, did make use of a recovery facility. The rest of the survey was based upon questions asked to this group.

Do you have a policy on how far away your recovery facility must be from company premises?

The overall results show that a minority, 46.1 percent, of respondents had a formal policy on how far away the recovery facility should be. However, there were clear geographical differences, with 62 percent of US-based respondents and 52.5 percent of those in the UK having a formal policy.

The policies of US companies were generally based upon much longer distances between primary and recovery facilities than UK ones, mainly due to the US's higher probability of extreme environmental disasters.

Specific policies of US companies included:

- Greater than 100 miles.
- 5 miles - different power grid, different phone exchange.
- At minimum, on a separate power grid and phone company central office.
- Out of state and region.
- Greater than 50 miles.
- Our recovery facility must be a minimum of 65 miles from our primary site.
- 6-10 miles away since we are in Minnesota and do not experience earthquakes or hurricanes.
- 100 miles is our rule of thumb, but far enough to be on separate infrastructure systems and, using "good judgement", outside the path of any one natural disaster (tornado, etc).
- Different metropolitan area.
- 50 miles, no more than 3 to 4 hours.
- 300 miles or distant enough so that any single event would not encompass the original site and its recovery site.

Policies of UK-based companies included:

- Outside a two mile exclusion zone.
- Around five miles away by direct routes.

- 60 minutes or a maximum of 40 miles.
- A compromise between being far enough away to hopefully not suffer the same impact but not too far so that it is still feasible to get critical staff there. Generally 10 miles minimum, 30 miles maximum.
- All of our recovery sites are 30+ miles away from our offices due to the location of the recovery sites. If using internal offices would look to use an office which is at least five miles away.
- Based upon risk assessment of individual locations.
- Following a recent review we now have access to recovery facilities close to our office premises for testing and localised incidents. Our contract also allows us to use out of town facilities with the same supplier in the event of a city wide incident.
- More than 2 km miles. Not in the same power grid or telephone exchange area.
- Must be at least 5 miles away.
- Must be outside common threats, but still reachable within one hour using public transport.
- Outside a one mile grid.
- Outside the main city centre exclusion zone area.
- Reasonably accessible to existing staff – i.e. within reach of public transport from the head office.
- Approx. five miles away, but this has been introduced recently, so some recovery sites go against that policy.
- To facilitate any of the three sites we operate in the London area. To be able to meet the needs of any of these sites in an emergency taking into account the individual operational, staffing and geographical requirements.
- Within one hour travel time.

Policies from companies based in other countries included:

- At least 30kms .
- Separate power grids, close to public transport and at least 5kms apart.
- 100 Km. Far enough to avoid a parallel attack and close enough to be there by car in 1.5 hours average, to continue operations.
- Must be at least 7 miles in case of closure due to chemical attacks and bombs.
- The policy is that the facility should be as close as possible to the factory, but outside of a 10 mile radius. This will also make testing easier and more convenient.
- Recovery facility must be further than 10 miles and not further than 60 miles from company premises.
- Minimum of 20km.
- Out-of-region > 250 miles.
- Within the same metro area but not in a different state.
- In excess of 100 miles.
- 2 km minimum.
- Minimum 25 miles.
- It must be within a distance determined by software/hardware facilities. Close facilities can be OK if fortress type building methods are used.
- More than 9 miles.
- 30 miles.
- Because we are in a location that has very little risk of terrorism and very low likelihood of natural disasters, we are primarily focused on having separate power and telecoms infrastructures.
- At least 20 miles.

Are any of your company premises located within a central/city business district?

The vast majority, 76.4 percent of respondents, said that 'Yes' their company had premises located within a CBD. This indicates that the migration of companies away from CBDs, which was prophesied after 9/11, has not happened to any great extent. However, companies do seem to be taking distance criteria between primary sites and recovery sites seriously. Of the companies that did have a CBD location only a minority, 42.3 percent, had a recovery facility in the same city. Of these only 6.8 percent used a recovery facility within 1km of the primary site; 8.1 percent used a facility between 1km and 2 km away; 17.6 percent had a recovery facility between 2 and 5 km away; 35.1 percent located the recovery facility between 5 km and 10 km away from the primary site and for the remaining 32.4 percent the recovery facility was more than 10km, although still within the same city limits.

Are you planning to change the way you use/view recovery facilities in the future?

57.7 percent of respondents said that they had plans to change their current approach to recovery facilities in the future. The changes planned could be grouped into the following categories, listed in order of response:

- * **Move recovery facilities further away from primary sites:** 21.3 percent
- * **Move away from using third party suppliers and develop a company-owned recovery facility:** 11.5 percent
- * **Implement the use of new technologies for recovery purposes:** 6.6 percent
(Solutions mentioned included the use of mirrored sites and SANs)
- * **Move recovery facilities closer to primary sites:** 4.9 percent
- * **Expand the scope of the recovery facility beyond just IT recovery:** 4.9 percent
(Business and workarea provision where the main additions mentioned)
- * **Move away from in-house provision and use a third party supplier:** 3.2 percent
- * **Linking existing sites/recovery facilities together:** 3.2 percent
- * **Review of recovery facility power supply grid to avoid the primary and recovery sites getting caught in the same blackout:** 3.2 percent

Other miscellaneous plans which did not fit into the above categories included:

- * Add dedicated alternate work area rather than shared internal areas.
- * Consider metropolitan impacts as well as wireless and "last mile" impacts to business continuity.
- * Develop dual use recovery facilities.
- * Ensure that all facilities have maximum flexibility and can take staff from any location.
- * Greater availability of resources and redundancy of key IT hardware and software.
- * Testing more frequently.
- * Provide parallel operations from several recovery sites.
- * We are trying to split critical functions between cities to insure we can continue the most critical work if employees cannot work in any one city. Since a geographic disaster may affect employees and their homes,

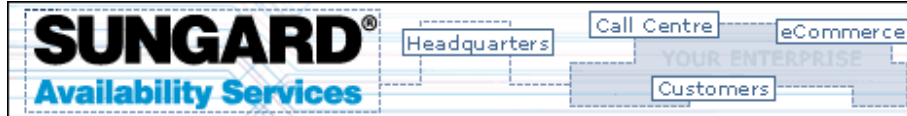
we are trying to have employees in other locations pickup the work until affected employees are able to resume working.

* Would like to ensure that each location will have a recovery facility within its own city.

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