



Continuity of Operations (COOP) – Continuing to Serve (CTS) Planning Guide

Purpose: The purpose of this document is to provide a general guide and a step by step process for Houses of Worship (HOWs) to develop, test and implement a plan to support their ability to respond in time of emergency. The focus of the Continuing to Serve (CTS) plan is to resume and recover services provided to the HOW's staff, congregants and the community in accordance with their priority and the HOW's resources.

The protection and care of people is always the highest priority in time of emergency and is supported by a separate Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) that is integrated with the CTS plan.

The following general considerations are generic to any organization and are provided as background information. Widely accepted best practices are provided to assist in developing a CTS plan. Appendix A provides a process for identifying CTS requirements and examples for developing action oriented plans to accomplish specific CTS requirements. Appendices B through E provide examples of action oriented plans.

Additionally, the CTS guide and development process align with the **ReadyNova Business Preparedness Planner** electronic template which is generic to any organization. The ReadyNova Preparedness Planner electronic template allows the CTS development team to document, share, and revise essential information that is needed to develop and maintain a CTS plan. The ReadyNova Preparedness Planner is publicly available at no charge on the Internet at: <http://readynova.org>. The following CTS Program Description and Guide includes reference to the applicable Sections in the ReadyNova Business Preparedness Planner.

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Preparing Your Organization

Preparing your organization for emergencies requires an inclusive and sustained effort which is easy to set aside due to other day to day requirements. Ideally, every HOW should be completely prepared for all emergencies, but that may not be possible. A realistic approach should consider the people, time and funding available to support the planning effort. Even with very limited resources, any effort to consider and identify what needs to be done and who needs to do it is a necessary first step and provides some level of preparedness which can be built upon over time

A widely accepted means to improve the ability to Continue to Serve (CTS) is to develop and maintain a realistic CTS plan based upon the HOW’s mission. The mission and the discussions with involved personnel and HOW lay leadership support identifying and setting priorities for services, establishing and documenting procedures, testing those procedures and reviewing the effectiveness of the plan on a periodic basis and following an actual emergency.

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- The development and maintenance of a CTS plan requires HOW leadership to set mission objectives and to provide necessary personnel and resource support.
- The development and maintenance of a CTS plan is an inclusive team process. It requires the expertise and involvement of members of the HOW community who collectively understand the mission, objectives and resources of the HOW. The size of the team depends upon the size and complexity of the HOW and should be large enough to provide expertise across the HOW's responsibilities, yet small enough to be manageable. A team of 3 to 5 members is generally recommended.
- A project manager (staff or congregation leader) is necessary to provide guidance and structure to the team's efforts.
- Progress should be reviewed and changes made as necessary.
- Start with the basics. An excellent first step, is discussing preparedness requirements with staff, leadership, congregants, groups who use the HOW's facilities, with other HOWs, and county officials (Fire and Rescue Department, Police Department, and Office of Emergency Management) is a first step and better than not getting started at all. Remember: begun is half done.

The #1 Priority

Life and Safety - Life and safety issues are the highest priority and are addressed in the accompanying Emergency Operation Plan (EOP) description and process.



- Actions necessary to protect people from injuries/death during emergency situations fall into the general categories of: Evacuation; Shelter in Place; and Lockdown. These actions are identified in the Emergency Operation Plan.
- Local officials (Fire and Rescue Department, Police Department, and Office of Emergency Management) have the most current information and expertise to assist

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HOWs in developing necessary plans and processes. They are generally available or provide assistance with developing your CTS plan, but please call ahead to arrange for a consultation. .

- Printed copies of the facility Emergency Operation Plan should be made available to groups and individuals using HOW's facilities (including outside groups and congregants attending services and events)
- Selected staff and congregants (monitors) should be trained for emergency situations to include health emergencies and the location of medical supplies and devices. It is recommended that these trained individuals be on site during HOW activities.

Essential Services

The identification and prioritization of essential services and the resources needed to deliver these services are the foundation of your CTS plan.



- Not every service is of an equal priority and decisions need to be made as to which services are to be resumed immediately and which can be recovered and restored at a later time.
- Consider the possibility that some services, by themselves, may not appear to be a high priority, but that they may be necessary to continue or restore other higher priority services. See the **ReadyNOVA Preparedness Planner** Section 3.
- If services provided by an HOW include the use of facilities by outside groups on a contractual basis, legal counsel should be sought to determine if providing alternate facilities for these groups following emergency situations is required by the terms of the contract. See the **ReadyNova Preparedness Planner** Section 6.
- HOW leaders should provide spiritual support to their staff, congregants and the community during and immediately following emergency events. A high priority is to establish these services at the normal site or at a pre-arranged alternate site that is known or can be immediately communicated to those in need of spiritual support (see

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section on Communication that follows). See the **Ready Nova Preparedness Planner** Section 7.

Authority and Order of Succession

Emergency response requires leadership and direction for an organization's actions and coordination with authorities and other local organizations. A HOW needs to determine a chain of leadership, succession and authority to make decisions and execute actions if key leaders are not available for any reason. Possible causes of temporary loss of leadership include incapacity, the need for the primary leader/s to rest, or the need for primary leaders to provide other priority services.



- The designation of authority and order of succession requires prior approval through the HOW's hierarchy and the designee's personal acknowledgement of assigned responsibilities. Said designees should have the necessary training to accomplish specified actions and coordination of program services.
- The designation of authority and order of succession should include the authorization and ability to contract for external services and otherwise expend funds (e.g. credit card, writing checks) in an expedited manner as necessary to meet emergency operations and CTS requirements.
- The designation of authority and order of succession must be current and should be in writing and made available to local authorities including the local Police Department, Fire and Rescue Department, and Office of Emergency Management, and to other individuals and organizations as necessary.
- See the **Ready Nova Preparedness Planner** Sections 4, 5 and 12.

Communication

Timely and accurate communication is essential to emergency response and coordination and the ability to Continue to Serve. Clear and concise communications between the

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decision makers and impacted staff, congregants and the community are critical to implementing and sustaining the CTS Plan.



- Your CTS communications plan should consider all facility and service stakeholders, including consider HOW leadership, staff, congregants, groups that use a HOW's facilities, local authorities, other HOWs, etc.
- Different stakeholders may have different communication preferences, capabilities and accommodations needs due to many considerations such as disability, age, languages, and/or access to technology, etc. These communication needs should be considered when determining communication resources and processes.
- Communication capabilities should provide for redundancy through multiple methods such as landline and cellular telephone, texting, social media, email, internet, portable radio, commercial radio, and the use of community resources such as local service television stations, and other HOWs' assistance. Alternatives should be considered to develop a communication capability that best matches the HOW's resources and CTS plan.
- The use and acceptance of the internet for communicating with large audiences is constantly expanding. If the internet is part of your communication process it should include the ability to update the internet site from more than one remote location and for more than one person to be able to change Internet site content.
- See the **Ready Nova Preparedness Planner** Section 8.

Vital Records and Databases

Vital records and databases include printed and electronic media. Redundancy is critical to avoiding the loss of vital printed and electronic media by avoiding storing records and data in more than physical location or on more than one computer. Decisions and actions providing this redundancy should be as simple or complex as necessary to provide access and retrieval of records and data consistent with their support of critical services.

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- Not all records and data bases are of equal need to support critical services. Your plan and level of redundancy provided should reflect those needs and the capabilities required to support your critical services.
- Options may include storing original documents in a fire proof safe or storage container, the storage of duplicate print documents away from the HOW, scanning documents to electronic storage, sending electronic files to a secondary location such as a company providing electronic storage for a fee or the home of a selected HOW individual, and copying files to a thumb drive or hard disk on a regular basis and moving the copy to an alternate location following each update.
- The key is to avoid the possibility of the loss of records and/or data stored in a single location or on a single device by maintaining a level of redundancy for access to records and/or data consistent with their importance within the CTS plan.
- See the **Ready Nova Preparedness Planner** Section 9.

Alternate Facilities

HOWs must be able to meet the needs of their staff, congregants and the community in emergency situations. If the HOW's facilities are inaccessible due to minor or major disruptions, adequate alternate facilities for rapidly resuming the highest priority services must be designated and communicated to stakeholders impacted by the event.



- Alternate facilities may include public buildings, other HOWs through formal or informal mutual aid agreements, and rented or donated spaces.
- The location of alternate facilities needs to strike a balance between proximity to those being served and the physical distance from the original facility to guard against being impacted by the same incident.

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- Alternate short-term facilities for immediate return to services should be pre-identified and their location communicated to the HOW's staff and congregants.
- The CTS Plan timeline for restoration of services can provide guidance when considering alternate long-term facilities after the disrupting event.
- The starting point is to determine the requirements for an alternate facility to include the location of the space, the amount and arrangement of the space required to restore essential services. Additional factors to consider include Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, parking, security, necessary furniture and equipment (e.g. computer and internet access, telephones, etc.), and the availability of backup power.
- The availability and suitability of the selected alternate facilities should be checked periodically.
- The location and contact information for selected alternate facilities should be communicated to staff, congregants and other stakeholders on a periodic basis and via the communication channels described above.
- See the **Ready Nova Preparedness Planner** Sections 7 and 13.

Maintaining Your CTS Program

Once created, a CTS Program requires periodic attention to refresh memories and to identify and update those areas needing change.



- Police Department, Fire and Rescue Department and Office of Emergency Management should be consulted in the initial program development and the review and update process.
- CTS plan actions should be practiced on a regular basis to develop and maintain the skills of those involved and to determine areas for updates and improvement. At a minimum the practice should occur on an annual basis or when changes occur to key leadership, personnel and/or the operating environment occur.
- The CTS should be shared and discussed with other HOWs who also continue to serve their congregants and community.

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Continuity of Operations (COOP) – Continuing to Serve



- See the **Ready Nova Preparedness Planner** Section 14.

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Appendix A

Continuity of Operations (COOP) – Continuing to Serve (CTS) Program Template

(Faith Based Organization's Name)

(Date)

Instructions: Discuss the following items with your organization's leadership and your CTS planning team to determine and adopt the action items that best fit the needs of the people entrusted into your care. The **Ready Nova Business Preparedness Planner** electronic template provides a means for electronically listing and storing your considerations and decisions for incorporation into your CTS plan.

1. **Prioritizing Services:** Consider the mission of your Houses of Worship (HOW) and list (according to the following categories of time) the services you provide to your staff, congregants, other HOWs, and the community in general.
 - a. Continuous Operations with No or Minimal Delay
 - b. Restored Operations within One to Seven Days
 - c. Recovered Operations from seven days to longer periods of time (specify the maximum amount of time to recover each service).

After you have listed the services in each category, determine if a lower priority service is required to carry out a higher priority service and adjust the priorities accordingly.

2. **Listing Resources:** List the resources and actions required to deliver the services identified and prioritized above. Start with the resources which are considered to support all services such as leadership, staff support, communication capabilities (telephone, text, internet, intranet, and other means), vital records and documents (printed and/or electronic), physical office space, meeting space for groups, transportation, etc. Next include individual resources and a list of actions required to deliver specific services.

Appendix A

Continuity of Operations (COOP) – Continuing to Serve (CTS) Program Template

- a. Resources supporting several or all services and actions required to deliver services.
 - b. Resources supporting one service and actions required to deliver service.
3. **Scenarios:** Consider several hazard scenarios which have increasing levels of disruption in terms of damage and duration. Consider the following representative scenarios which are not hazard specific (do not focus on the specific cause of a disruption), but instead focus on the impact of the disruptive incident.
- a. Scenario One: The injury or death of an HOW leader, staff member and/or a congregant.
 - b. Scenario Two: A temporary lack of access to and/or use of the HOW facilities (hours to several days) due to a disruption such as an area closure, utility outages, heavy snow, etc.
 - c. Scenario Three: A long term lack of access to and/or use of the HOW facilities due to a long term disruption (several days to weeks) such as repairable physical damage to utilities and/or the facilities.
 - d. Scenario Four: A protracted lack of access to and/or use of the HOW facilities (weeks to indefinite) due to a major disruption such as a fire, tornado or earthquake resulting in major structural damage to the HOW facilities and/or the surrounding area.

Match the scenario consequences with the resources required to continue to provide the prioritized services. Resources that generally support CTS plans across multiple scenarios include:

- Personnel accountability plans and procedures
- Personal and family preparedness for in house staff and for congregants

Appendix A

Continuity of Operations (COOP) – Continuing to Serve (CTS) Program Template

- Communicating with staff, congregants, groups using your facility, local authorities, and other members of the community
 - Arranging for additional and alternate service providers such as clergy from other localities, retired clergy, lay leaders, clergy from other HOWs
 - An alternate facility such as a public building, school, etc. for temporary use
 - Mutual aid agreements with other HOWs and/or other community groups for providing alternative office and meeting space and the accompanying access and support
 - Agreements with commercial organizations to provide leased or donated space
 - Access to printed and electronic records and data
 - Transportation of essential electronic equipment and furniture to temporary facility.
 - Long term considerations resulting from major disruptive events
4. **Plans:** Develop printed documentation in the form of action oriented lists, locations, and instructions in the format of check off sheets that support the accomplishment of required tasks. (See Appendices B through E)
- Relocation to an alternate facility may require actions including gathering and transporting required equipment and furniture, notifications, obtaining access, turning on utilities, etc. These actions should be listed in the order of occurrence with contact information of personnel supporting and conducting the relocation. Ideally, actions can be separated into individual check off sheets to allow multiple personnel to complete required tasks.
 - The physical disruption or breakage of some or all utilities (water, gas, and electricity) may require an immediate shut down. You cannot count on the one or few individuals who know how to do this safely and quickly to be available. Accordingly, there should be a diagram of the location of the shut off points and the steps to follow readily accessible for any staff, leader, congregation member or for the first responders.
 - Evacuation of the facility may require securing all access points once the evacuation is complete. Like with utilities, a diagram and instructions should be available for any staff member, leader, congregant, user group, and first responders.

Appendix A

Continuity of Operations (COOP) – Continuing to Serve (CTS) Program Template

- In the event damage and/or relocation the process for locating, retrieving, and restoring vital records and information/data should be specified in sufficient detail to support needed access, use, and security.

The above examples and the example check off lists in Appendices B through E are in no way intended to be all inclusive of any HOW's particular requirements. They are provided to help support the consideration and identification of what needs to be done in an emergency situation. Additionally the examples are provided to emphasize the point that simple standalone action oriented diagrams and instructions that allow people to rapidly determine what needs to be done and how to do it are generally more effective than multipage plans that can be physically cumbersome and difficult to use, particularly in emergencies.

5. **Train and Practice:** Discuss, train for and practice the required actions with the relevant staff on a periodic basis.
6. **Maintain and Improve:** Based upon the discussions, training, practice, lessons learned and changes of the personnel, the internal and external environment and situations, review and revise the CTS program and plans as necessary.

Appendix B

Example Check Off (Action) Sheet for Relocating to an Alternate Facility

If you feel there is any danger in remaining in the building immediately evacuate the building and await the arrival of the fire department and/or police department before reentering the building.

1. Contact your leadership: _____
Telephone: (____) _____
2. Contact your facilities manager: _____
Telephone: (____) _____
3. Contact your local fire department:
Telephone: (____) _____
4. Contact your local police department:
Telephone: (____) _____
5. Contact the person/s who own and operate the alternate facility to arrange for a visit to check on pre-arranged agreements for occupying and operating out of the alternate facility: _____
Telephone: (____) _____
6. Visit the alternate facility to check on the prearranged agreements for access, security, utilities, Internet connectivity, parking, availability of needed space, furniture, equipment, etc.
7. Contact your staff, leaders, congregants, groups who use your primary facility, and any other impacted people and groups to provide them with necessary information based upon your pre-arranged methods (e.g. telephone tree, Internet, social media, radio announcement, etc.). This necessary information should include as a minimum
 - Location of the alternate facility
 - Business operations that will be conducted at the alternate facility
 - Names and schedules of the people who will work in the alternate facility
 - Method for gaining access to the alternate facility
 - Transportation available to and parking at the alternate facility
 - Services to be provided at the alternate facility
 - Days and hours services will be provided at the alternate facility

Appendix B

Example Check Off (Action) Sheet for Relocating to an Alternate Facility

- Telephone number/s of the alternate facility
 - Other means of contacting the alternate facility
 - Estimated duration of the use of the alternate facility
-
8. Carry out plans for retrieving vital records and electronic data and equipment for conducting necessary operations and providing services at the alternative facility.
 9. Consider the impact of a long-term event on postal, delivery, and banking services. Alternate plans for postal, delivery and banking services must be addressed. Creditors should be contacted to relay forwarding addresses and contact information.

Appendix C

Example Check Off (Action) Sheet for Securing Utilities

If there is a strong smell of gas immediately evacuate all people from the building, do not attempt to secure the gas line. Call 911 and await the arrival of the fire department and/or police department.

Contact your local fire department: _____

Telephone: (____) _____

1. Contact your local police department: _____

Telephone: (____) _____

2. Contact your facilities manager: _____

Telephone: (____) _____

3. Contact your leadership: _____

Telephone: (____) _____

4. Contact your utility provider emergency services

Water: (____) _____

Gas: (____) _____

Electric: (____) _____

5. Locate the utility cut off mechanism and follow the instructions

Water: Blue valve with attached tag labeled 'water valve' located in room ____ on the basement level on the ____ hand wall upon entering and ____ feet above the floor. See included floor plan. Turn the valve clockwise with sufficient pressure to ensure it is fully closed.

Gas: Black valve with attached tag labeled 'gas valve' located in room ____ on the basement level on the ____ hand wall upon entering and ____ feet above the floor. See included floor plan. Turn the valve clockwise with sufficient pressure to ensure it is fully closed.

Appendix C

Example Check Off (Action) Sheet for Securing Utilities

Electric: Gray electrical distribution box with the top two switches labeled 'main shut off' located in room ____ on the basement level on the ____ hand wall upon entering and ____ feet above the floor.

6. Upon arrival of the fire department and or police department, explain the actions you have taken and provide them with a copy of this check off (action) sheet.
7. Attach a floor plan that includes the location of utility shut off and the instructions for shutting off the utility.

Appendix D

Example Check Off (Action) Sheet for Securing Your Building's Entrances

If you feel there is any danger in remaining in the building immediately evacuate the building and await the arrival of the fire department and/or police department.

1. Contact your local fire department: _____
Telephone: (____) _____
2. Contact your local police: _____
Telephone: (____) _____
3. Contact your leadership: _____
Telephone: (____) _____
4. Contact your facility's manager: _____
Telephone: (____) _____
5. Use the Building Utility Check Off (Action) Sheet as necessary.
6. Locate all of the buildings' non-emergency entrances/exits (there are ___ non-emergency entrances/exits) that are secured using internal dead bolts and/or key locks. (See the attached floor plan).

Obtain the non-emergency entrances'/exits' keys which are located in _____.
Additionally, _____ and _____ have the keys. Lock all non-emergency entrances/exits.
7. Locate all of the buildings' emergency entrances/exits (there are ___ emergency entrances/exits) that cannot be opened from the outside except by key). (See the attached floor plan).

Check all of the buildings' emergency entrances/exits to make sure they are properly closed.
8. Upon arrival of the fire department and/or police department, explain the actions you have taken and provide them with a copy of this check off (action) sheet.
9. Attach a floor plan that includes the location of utility shut off and the instructions for shutting off the utility.

Appendix E

Example Check Off (Action) Sheet for Locating, Retrieving, and Restoring Vital Printed Records and Electronic Information/Data

If you feel there is any danger in remaining in the building immediately evacuate the building and await the arrival of the fire department and/or police department.

1. Contact your leadership: _____
Telephone: (____) _____
2. Contact your facilities manager: _____
Telephone: (____) _____
3. Contact your local fire department: _____
Telephone: (____) _____
4. Contact your local police department: _____
Telephone: (____) _____
5. Contact the person/s and/or organizations responsible for the custody and storage of your vital printed documents and electronic information/data and engage them in the following steps 6 through 9
Telephone: (____) _____
Telephone: (____) _____
6. If and when allowed by the fire department or police department to re-enter your building, locate and inventory vital printed records and electronic information/data to determine losses and the need to re-create them from redundant sources
7. Determine which vital printed records and electronic information/data are required to resume, recover and restore services and supporting functions based upon their priority at the primary location and/or at an alternate location
8. Arrange for the re-creation of damaged vital printed records and electronic information/data from the redundant sources at the primary location and/or at an alternate location
9. Following the emergency re-create the redundancy of vital printed records and electronic information/data

Appendix E

Example Check Off (Action) Sheet for Locating, Retrieving, and Restoring Vital
Printed Records and Electronic Information/Data