

You're sitting at home, trying to unwind with some news after a long day in the office. Suddenly a bulletin announces that there has been an explosion and fire at a downtown building. When the live shot comes on, you find yourself staring at your workplace, flames shooting from the windows and roof. After several minutes, the newscast cuts away to other news, leaving you with the quandary "What do I do tomorrow?"

The answer to this question, for you and all your colleagues, is in your BCP. BCP is the abbreviation for Business Continuity Planning, and it is a tool that puts in place a plan to ensure continuity of essential operations until normal activities can be restored.

Led jointly by ADM(Fin CS) and the DOS SJS within DND, the initiative stems from a Government of Canada policy which directs that all federal government departments must put in place plans to ensure that core and critical services can be delivered in times of emergency and crises. These disruptions could run the gamut from short term disruptions caused by natural events, such as the Ice Storm in 1998, to potential longer- term disruption caused by a larger scale natural calamity such as a pandemic.

Since the fall of 2007, representatives of the ECS's and Level 1's have been tackling the development of the plan. First up, the department established a governance framework, affirmed the role of the department, and conducted a risk/threat assessment. Next was the Business Impact Analysis, which selected and prioritized the critical operations, functions, and services and the assets, facilities, people, and resources that support these operations and services. With this determined, BCP representatives then took their first cut at the BCP plan itself, and submitted their drafts to the DND/CF BCP Action Team for comment. Feedback was then incorporated, and then each Level One submitted their plan.

These plans are now being reviewed by senior staff, and the intent is to have an overall plan in place by March of this year. Then comes the real test, exercise scenarios which will be used to validate the plans, and point out deficiencies. These will begin in the summer 09 timeframe.

So what does all of this mean to you? One of the criteria for success of the plan is to have a comprehensive internal information plan in place. This article is one of the many steps in that process. The best measure of the effectiveness of that campaign will be if each member of DND and the CF in the NCR has a basic knowledge of the BCP program, and most importantly, if they find themselves in a scenario as described in the opening paragraph, know exactly what they have to do.