

Often, critical processes and services vary depending upon the emergency or if they have a time or calendar component. For example, a blizzard would make snow removal a critical service, while a hurricane would not. Similarly, snow removal is a critical service in the winter, but not in the summer.

Building on the results documented in Worksheet #11, Worksheet #13 helps further to evaluate essential agency functions. If, at any point, the function is determined not to be essential, it is not necessary to complete the questionnaire for that function.

Complete Worksheet #14 for each essential function. This worksheet will help identify the critical processes or services, personnel, records, equipment and resources for each essential function, as well as the systems that support them. Be sure to include critical back room functions such as Payroll, Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable.

Finally, use Worksheet # 15 to identify, for each essential function, the senior management and technical positions needed to lead the essential functions and the support positions necessary to carry it out. Remember to specify the position, not an individual by name. For this exercise, assume you have access to all personnel at the time you need all personnel.

4. Prioritize Essential Functions

Once all essential functions and their supporting critical processes and services have been identified, prioritize the functions according to relative importance to resuming operations when a catastrophic event occurs. Prioritization requires determination of the following:

- Time criticality of each essential function.
- Sequence for recovery of essential functions and their critical processes.

An essential function's time criticality is determined by the time that function can be suspended before it adversely affects the organization's core mission. Time criticality can be measured by recovery time objectives. A recovery time objective (RTO) is the period of time within which systems, processes, services, or functions must be recovered after an outage.

Deciding which essential function should be restored first in a crisis would be impossible without also considering their related critical processes and services. Critical processes or services are those that must be resumed soon--generally within 24 hours after a disruption. By contrast, secondary processes or services do not need to be resumed as quickly after a disruption.