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Credential for emergencies

Philadelphia Business Journal - by MaryAnn E. Marrocolo

The Institute for Business and Home Safety estimates that 25 percent of businesses do not reopen after a disaster. Your business' survival and competitive advantage are dependent upon your ability to quickly resume operations following a large emergency. The Corporate Emergency Access System (CEAS) complements your company's business continuity program, and is an excellent response tool that can assist you with disaster recovery efforts.

CEAS is a pre-event credentialing program available to businesses in the city. When deemed safe by first responders, employees designated as "critical" by a business can gain access to restricted areas following a disaster or serious emergency. Access is granted by means of a secure identification card that is issued to essential employees and recognized by police officials securing the perimeter of an emergency.

By expediting access to secure areas, the CEAS program gives businesses the opportunity to plan ahead and the tools to implement the plan when it is needed. Expedited access affords businesses the opportunity to rescue valuable assets such as cash, checks and securities; retrieve vital records, hardware and critical equipment; stabilize and sustain core information technology systems; and conduct damage assessments. Ultimately, it compresses the time in which a business will be unable to operate, saving untold amounts of dollars.

Recently, the CEAS program was activated in New York City when a steam explosion prompted a portion of Midtown Manhattan to be sealed off for several days. Businesses enrolled in the CEAS program were able to access their facilities via checkpoints established by the police.

The City of Philadelphia's Managing Director's Office of Emergency Management established and manages the CEAS program in partnership with the police and fire departments, administrator Business Network of Emergency Resources (BNET), the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, the African American Chamber of Commerce, the Asian American Chamber of Commerce, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Center City District, and other private sector partners.

Businesses can enroll at www.ceas.com or call the CEAS Customer Support Center at 888-353-BNET. For more information, visit www.readyphiladelphia.org. When enrolling, you will be asked to:

- Designate a coordinator who will be responsible for administration of the program in your company.

- Determine the company location(s) to enroll in the program.
- Identify which employees will take part in CEAS at each location.
- Determine which employees will require access to multiple facilities and identify the facilities they will need to access.

MaryAnn E. Marrocolo is deputy managing director with the City of Philadelphia's Managing Director's Office of Emergency Management.

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