



Are You Prepared for a Disaster?

Disaster preparedness is something that every broadcast engineer must deal with. A session at the upcoming NAB Broadcast Engineering Conference (BEC, April 10-15, 2010, Las Vegas, Nev. – see below for additional information) entitled “*Disaster Preparedness, Recovery and Security*” includes a paper, excerpted here, which focuses on the experiences of Steve Fluker, Director of Engineering with Cox Radio, Orlando, in dealing with the aftermath of a tornado that destroyed one of Cox’s Florida facilities.

INTRODUCTION – at 4 a.m. on February 2, 2007, I got a phone call telling me that WCFB, 94.5 was off the air. The station operator told me that there were severe storms near the tower site so it could be related. I attempted to call the remote control system, but the phone just rang with no answer. Next I tried the wireless link through my PC, but again no response. Fearing the worst, I called another engineer, grabbed my camera, and headed for the tower site which was an hour drive away. When we arrived, we were faced with the reality that this storm had produced an F4 tornado which had taken down the 1,500 foot tower, and had destroyed the transmitter building and all of the equipment inside (see photo). Once the news got out that our tower was down, our competitors started calling our clients telling them that we would be off the air for months, and that they could handle our schedules. That might have been the case had we not been prepared for what to do in a situation like this.



GETTING BACK ON THE AIR –

Because of previous planning and being prepared, we were able to get back on the air at 2:37 p.m. that same afternoon. The work that day included emergency FCC filings to operate from a different tower, and to operate with an emergency STL. This temporary signal covered the entire metro Orlando area, and within a month, we were back up to full power and full antenna height with a short term lease on another nearby tall tower. This gave us the opportunity to take the proper amount of time to rebuild the tower and building the right way without cutting corners to speed up the project.

WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF YOU – When a major disaster like this one hits, you can bet that your telephone will begin ringing and won’t stop for days or even weeks. Your General Manager, program director, and sales managers will all call wanting to know when you’ll have the station back on the air. The business manager will want to know how much this will cost and have you talked to the insurance company yet. Among these calls will also be one from your insurance adjuster asking for a list of all of the equipment damaged, and the approximate value of each item. And “Oh by the way,” they want it as soon as possible. In my case, they asked if I could get the initial report to them within a week.

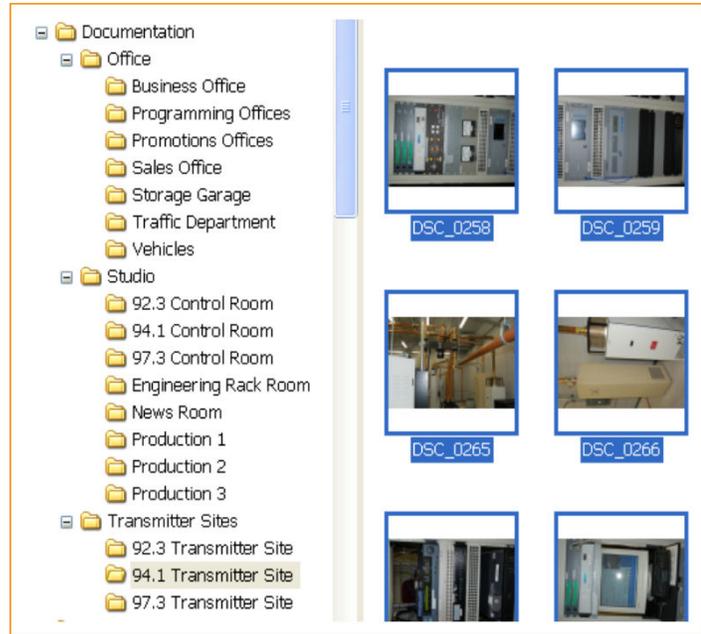
PROPER PREPARATION PAYS OFF – There are a few steps that you can do right now that will pay off when you come face to face with a problem. First, come up with a document or book with all of the information you will need in times of trouble. This Business Continuity Plan should include the following:

- List all service providers that you do business with. This includes telephone companies, Internet providers, power companies, water Company, network programming providers, IT services, etc.
- Create a list of all emergency contacts that you may need. This would include sheriff’s department, fire department, local hospitals, environmental protection agency, security companies, poison control, and

hazmat organizations. Also include the FCC and FAA for NOTAM notifications (be sure to have all of your tower registration numbers listed).

DOCUMENT WITH PHOTOS – Now that you have a plan in place you need to know what you have at all of your locations. The best way to document your facilities is with pictures. A digital camera can give you a very accurate and extensive record of what you have at virtually no cost. Be sure to organize your pictures on your computer under files based on your locations as shown in the figure. Keep a copy of these photos on a backed up network drive, as well as on CD's located at every tower site, and one at your home. You can never have too many copies, or too many pictures.

SUMMARY – a disaster can strike at any time, and is usually unexpected. Don't be in denial that this can't happen to you, or that you have plenty of time to prepare later. It's too late once the storm hits. Having the proper written plan, photos of your facilities, old invoices, and copies of old drawings and documentation can greatly reduce the stress when you come face to face with a tragedy. You'll also build confidence with your managers, corporate office, and the insurance company when you show that you are organized and ready to face the challenge of rebuilding, which is always a positive thing.



Mr. Fluker will present this paper on Wednesday, April 14, 2009 starting at 9:30 a.m. in room S226 of the Las Vegas Convention Center. It will also be included in its entirety in the *2010 NAB Broadcast Engineering Conference Proceedings*, on sale at the 2010 NAB Show Store and available on-line from the NAB Store (www.nabstore.com) after the convention. Other papers being presented during this session include the following:

- *Strategies for Disaster Preparedness: Staying on the Air if the Worst Happens*, Charles Kelly, Director of Sales, Nautil
- *Putting the Final Touches on Next-Generation EAS Panel*, moderated by Larry Walke, Associate General Counsel, NAB. Scheduled panelists include Antwane Johnson, Division Director and Project Manager, FEMA, James Barnett, Chief, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, FCC, Suzanne Goucher, President and CEO, Maine Association of Broadcasters, Thomas Beers, Chief, Policy Division, FCC, and Wade Witmer, Deputy Division Director, FEMA.

For additional conference information visit the NAB Show Web page at www.nabshow.com.

2010 NAB Broadcast Engineering Conference Summary of Presentations

Check out the [papers](#) that will be presented at the 2010 NAB Broadcast Engineering Conference in Las Vegas, April 10 –15, 2010.

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