

Developing a disaster recovery program vital to peace of mind

By Jimmy Patterson

Disaster Recovery Plan.

Just a simple mention of the term is ominous and conjures up thoughts of chaos of catastrophic proportions. Pictures come to mind

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of mass tragedy and a concerted effort to pick up the pieces from the calamity and widespread failure.

Exactly, Michael Dobey says.

Dobey, president of External Systems USA, was the featured speaker at the Midland Chamber of Commerce's August Networking Breakfast at Midland College's Roadrunner Room.

In this case, a Disaster Recovery Plan applies to communications systems, namely computer systems, and is defined as "the protection of your assets and planning for long-term resumption in case of interruption," Dobey said.

"The orderly and timely resumption of services is essential because if your business is not running you're not making money. Most people, though, don't have a disaster recovery plan at all."

Dobey urged a comprehensive inventory of all risk areas, including computer systems, phone lines, vehicles, even staff.

"Whatever plan you develop, test it," he said. "It doesn't do any good to think there's a plan in place if you haven't tested it."

Continued operations in the event of a disaster does not simply mean replacing your technology.

"It involves protecting your business practices, operational methods and daily routines, in addition to your business assets," Dobey said.

In preparing for disaster, business owners should answer the following questions:

- How long can your business afford to be down - an hour, a day, a week?
- How long can your customers wait on you until you're back in operation?
- What is their comfort level?
- Do customers see you as chaotic or organized?

Dobey stresses and re-stresses testing the DRP, noting that the plan is not valid until tested. Everyone in the organization must take part in the testing; key suppliers and customers must be identified and informed and the DRP must be tested at three different levels: minor problem, major disaster and catastrophe.