

Tips for maintaining government operations during a crisis

Home > Resources > Whitepapers >
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Predictions for an active hurricane season along the Atlantic, an **extended wildfire season** in the West and another spike in COVID-19 infections nationwide come as state and local governments work steadfastly to maintain services during the coronavirus pandemic. Those that take steps now to prepare for the possibility of ongoing adjustments in operations stand the best chance of weathering a crisis.

Anticipate additional closures

Many agencies have slowed down or closed to the public to follow social distancing guidelines in the wake of COVID-19. While they consider lifting lockdown restrictions, the possibility of future closures lurks. Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said a second round of coronavirus is **"inevitable."**

A recent **report** from the Center of Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Michigan lays out three scenarios for what the future of COVID-19 might look like in the United States. One possibility shows a wave twice as severe as the current one hitting in fall or winter. The report's authors said governments should plan for this worst-case situation, including the likelihood of no vaccine availability and no widespread immunity. Whichever scenario the pandemic follows, researchers said to prepare for at least another 18 to 24 months of significant activity, with hot spots popping up in diverse geographic areas.

COVID-19 isn't the only threat state and local governments face. Around the same time FEMA released **recommendations** to help emergency managers prepare for hurricanes and other disasters during ongoing pandemic response efforts, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association forecasted an **"above-normal" storm season** with six to 10 hurricanes.

Prioritize essential services

Every government should have a continuity of operations plan in place to ensure it provides essential services during a crisis. Some needs are obvious, including police, fire and medical help. Due to the likely duration of COVID-19, plans should also address how other services such as administration, finance and procurement will continue.

Use e-bidding to quickly access emergency supplies

The National Association of State Procurement Officials provides an **emergency preparedness guide** with best practices to help governments buy emergency supplies and follow procedures for reimbursement of expenses.

Electronic bidding (e-bidding) allows governments to swiftly connect with suppliers who can provide goods and services. DemandStar offers e-bidding to governments at no cost. The company **reported its fastest growth** in over a decade during the coronavirus pandemic.

Address the technology needs of a remote workforce

Adapting to a work from home environment has come easier to some agencies than others. The International City/County Management Association offers a helpful list of issues to consider when **developing a remote work policy**. They include determining whether staff have access to all systems needed to do their jobs.

During COVID-19 outbreaks, "the key is to move as many services as possible online to your website or other electronic means to limit or eliminate the need for face-to-face interactions," **recommends** the Municipal Research and Services Center in Washington state. Online solutions like DemandStar allow employees to be productive whether or not they are in the office.

Expect the unexpected

Ben Vaught, CEO of DemandStar has seen many cities face natural disasters. "No matter how much you plan, the unexpected is going to happen. You plan so that you can manage the unexpected. There's not going to be a blueprint for it," he said.

Is your government ready to implement eBidding? **Get started here!**

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