

WINTER IS COMING....ARE YOU READY?

That phrase is so ominous now based on its usage in the HBO series Game of Thrones (if you haven't seen it you should, but it isn't for the faint of heart so consider yourself forewarned), but the viewer knows exactly what it means: BE PREPARED, HUNKER DOWN, AND BE READY FOR A FIGHT!



It pretty much felt that way last winter in Skamania County. At the end of a pretty significant winter storm – the worst I have seen in the 20 years I have lived here – it was like looking at a war zone with trees uprooted or broken in half everywhere, power lines down, closed and limited access to SR-14 and I-84, the list goes on.....and it was like that for two weeks with cleanup lasting for months. The Farmer's Almanac is once again predicting a sturdy (yes, I said sturdy) winter season so it makes sense to take the prediction seriously for the health and safety of our families and businesses. There is quite a bit of information on the internet about preparing your family for winter storms and power outages. I recommend checking out these sources: [Winter Survival Kit](#), [Build a Kit](#), and [Winter Weather](#). I encourage you to do your research and identify what makes sense for you and your family.

Business preparedness is in a whole other realm as winter storms in the Gorge tend to put a halt to nearly all commerce activities sometimes for days and, as we saw last winter, weeks at a time. There is a wealth of information out there for businesses in order to prepare for storm events like these ones, but it varies greatly based on the complexities and structure of your business so here are the basics:

- Identify risks (physical and internal) –What is your greatest risk based on your business service/function? Look at [this checklist](#) to help you identify major risks to think about for the upcoming winter months. Consult with your insurance agent too. Many policies have business coverage and it's important to know what your options are. Ask ahead of time and always prepare for the worst case scenario!
- Understand your critical business functions – Those activities that are the most vital to your organization and include the following: 1) functions most sensitive to down time, 2) activities that fulfill legal or financial obligations to maintain cash flow, 3) obligations that play a key role in maintaining your business reputation, and 4) items that protect an irreplaceable asset. [This worksheet](#) will help you identify those functions.
- Address potential impacts – Based on the identified critical business functions, what are the additional steps your business needs to take to protect those functions? As we saw last winter, it took several weeks just to get commercial truck traffic back up and running, what plan do you have in place if the same type of event happens again this winter? [These checklists](#) offer a deep dive into specific areas of your business that need further analysis.

Remember – every business should have a plan and it's even more important when your margins are slim. Businesses need to expect the unexpected, especially in the Gorge where we have a short peak season, two shoulder seasons and one off season time period! With enough planning and business preparedness (and let's throw in a little bit of good luck to boot) the phrase WINTER IS COMING becomes less ominous and more a matter of standard business practice.

Happy planning!