



4/19/2022

Dear Heads of Agencies and Institutions,

In 2013, Texas issued the first Continuity Policy Letter, and pursuant to Texas Labor Code 412.054, SB 908, 80th RS, HB 1832, 84th RS, requiring each state organization to create a continuity plan that meets the standards of the Federal Emergency Management Agency Continuity of Operations (COOP) methodology. This 2022 Continuity Policy Letter acknowledges the advances made in the last nine years and sets forth the goals and objectives for the next five-year period. The State of Texas highly commends your entity's efforts on behalf of the government and the people of Texas.

Disaster events can cause not only expensive physical damage but also devastating reputational harm if an affected organization cannot deliver its products or services for an extended time. Service recipients will suffer in the absence of expected assistance, and taxpayers will demand accountability. With your efforts, the State of Texas has taken the lead in addressing these issues at the enterprise level.

The goal of continuity planning is to ensure each governmental organization continues essential functions unique to their own mission, and supports Texas essential functions to preserve continuity of government, which include:

1. **Maintaining continuity of government:** Ensure the continued functioning of state government under the Texas constitution, including critical government leadership elements and the orderly succession to key offices.
2. **Providing visible leadership:** Provide leadership visible to the state, the nation, and the world, and maintain the trust and confidence of the people of Texas.
3. **Defending the Texas constitution:** Defend the state constitution and prevent or interdict attacks against the state or its people, property, or interests.
4. **Maintaining effective relationships with neighbors and partners:** Maintain relationships and cooperative agreements with neighbors, foreign and domestic, and with all levels of government and private sector partners.
5. **Maintaining law and order:** Maintain civil order and public safety to protect people, property, and the rule of law by ensuring basic civil rights, preventing crime, and bringing to justice perpetrators of crime.
6. **Ensuring availability of emergency services:** Provide and/or assist local and tribal governments in Texas by providing critical emergency services and other necessary services and resources to recover from incidents.
7. **Maintaining economic stability:** Protect and stabilize the Texas economy to ensure public confidence in the state's finances.
8. **Ensuring availability of critical essential services:** Provide and/or assist in maintaining services that address the health, safety, and welfare needs of the people and protect the critical infrastructure of the state to sustain critical needs.

While it may be impossible to preserve normal, full-scale operations; with proper planning and preparation before an event, it is possible to ensure your ability to continue your most essential and time critical functions, i.e., those tasks that cannot be allowed to lapse for up to 30 days without risking irrecoverable loss. By accurately identifying essential functions, documenting procedures to continue

their performance, and procuring necessary resources to ensure their availability at the time of need, you protect your organization's ongoing existence. The State Office of Risk Management (SORM), Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM), Department of Public Safety (DPS), Department of Information Resources (DIR) and Texas Facilities Commission (TFC) partner to support these initiatives.

SORM administers continuity planning for the state and provides assistance to local government. Their purpose is to act as a partner to all entities by providing guidance, facilitating ongoing learning, and encouraging cooperation to help each entity develop its best program.

SORM's regular evaluation of COOP Plans and Exercises are intended to:

- Help each entity meet the standards established by the state.
- Advise on updates, developments, and improvements in plans, and exercise programs to aid continued growth.
- Encourage planning in tandem with other threat management programs to ensure cohesive, consistent, and complimentary actions, and minimize duplication and conflicting direction. This includes:
 - Preparedness (risk and safety planning)
 - Prevention (mitigation strategizing)
 - Emergency response (managing the disaster)
 - IT disaster recovery (protecting connectivity and data access and security)
 - Recovery (reconstituting normal operations)
- Facilitate sharing development between organizations to create community-based protection.

To further support state continuity planners, SORM expanded its resources by:

- Establishing a chartered Continuity Council.
- Developing additional tools to make planning easier and more effective.
- Assisting with development of effective training, testing, and exercising programs.
- Adapting the submission and review scheduling process.
- Working closely with other jurisdictions on best practices.

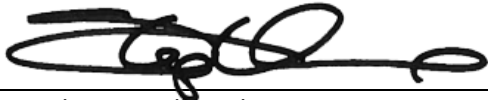
As the leader of your entity, you are encouraged to implement and support continuity within your organization by:

- Becoming familiar with, and supporting, the continuity concept, intent, and application to administer an effective, unified program.
- Implementing an all-hazards approach to ensure that essential functions can be sustained regardless of the impact of the disaster.
- Employing, contracting for, or sharing a certified continuity planner.
- Administering a training and awareness program to ensure all personnel understand their roles and responsibilities during a continuity event and are ready to step into these roles quickly and effectively with or without warning.
- Reviewing and approving the continuity plan annually and submitting for review according to the schedule provided by SORM.
- Administering an exercise program where annual exercises are conducted that rigorously test the plan to identify areas for continued improvement. *An actual disruptive incident can function in place of an exercise if COOP capabilities are tested during that event.*
- Reviewing and approving an after-action summary and improvement plan annually and submitting for review according to the schedule provided by SORM.

- Allocating the resources to support program goals and capabilities, including procurement of continuity resources within the multi-year strategic budget plan.
- Incorporating continuity responsibilities into employment evaluations for all personnel involved in creating, implementing, approving, and leading the program.
- Integrating continuity planning with other threat management programs to ensure they are cohesive and complimentary, maximize effectiveness and ease of use, and minimize duplication and conflicting information.
- Seeking opportunities to share planning and exercise development and execution with other entities, particularly those with whom you have interdependent essential functions, or who share building, geography, mission, risks, or customers.

Ensuring that critical government services continue to be available to the people of Texas under any conditions is a challenge. Success depends on the dedication of each entity and the quality of each program. Thank you for your support and commitment.

Respectfully,



Stephen S. Vollbrecht
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State Office of Risk Management

References:

- [2013 Texas Continuity Policy Letter](#)
- [Texas Labor Code 412.054](#)
- [Texas House Bill 1832](#)
- [Texas Senate Bill 908](#)
- [FEMA Continuity Guidance Circular \(2018\)](#)