>> SCOTT TEEL: Good afternoon, once again ladies and gentlemen. And thank you for joining today's webinar presented by the SBA and Agility Recovery, "Creating Evacuation and shelter-in-place plans." We will start at the top of the hour. We have quite a few people joining us today. Thank you for joining us. We'll be back in touch shortly.

(Standing by)

>> SCOTT TEEL: Okay, hello. Once again, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon and welcome to today's webinar creating evacuation and shelter-in-place plans, presented by Agility Recovery. My name is Scott Teel and I'm the marketing director here at Agility Recovery and I'll be your presenter today.

There are a couple of housekeeping items we need to cover. First of all, anyone who needs to submit a question can do so by using the go to webinar control panel on the right side of the screen. And my colleague Tom Cones is with me today, who will be facilitating the Q&A at the end of the session.

And this is being recorded, and a link to the recording will be sent out to all attendees after the session.

And if you want to download a copy of the slides, you can do so by using the link on the screen now. If you do choose to use that link, please pay special attention to it, because you must enter the HTTP portion of the link for it to work correctly, and it is also case sensitive. You must use all lower case letters.

Finally, this same link for the slides will be included in your follow-up e-mail. So now we'll move onto why you're all in attendance for today's webinar, and that's how to protect your staff
and any other visitors who may be on site at your facilities through developing evacuation and shelter-in-place plans.

So we're going to take a granular look at what constitutes a good plan and also what it should include, and then we'll follow down the path of what nuances you need to take place for both kinds of plans, evacuation or shelter-in-place. And finally we'll wrap up with some suggestions on the best way to test and exercise your plan.

So in this session, we're going to primarily focus on weather-related events: Large-scale disasters, both natural and manmade, and commercial accidents.

Now one element we will not be going into a great amount of detail for is active-shooter scenarios. Now I realize that's a hot-button issue for a lot of organizations, and the reason for this is because we believe there are many, many more elements involved in the strategic approach to an active-shooter scenario. Among them are workplace violence prevention programs and enhancing securities and much more than that.

Because of that unique topic and those elements beyond what we're going to cover here today requires some additional time. We think it deserves a more in-depth discussion, and probably the involvement of local law enforcement expertise and threat prevention specialists. Instead, we're going to lay the foundation for what we will be instructing on today.

We summarized for what you're going to be planning for. Anything that would threaten life safety, and much of those threats should be identified through what we call a risk assessment process. Now those of you who follow this prepare my business campaign may have heard about this before. But essentially it's an opportunity to sit down and diagnose all the various threats that could be posed to your organization. And during that, you'll be able to identify the things that you should be planning for.

But beyond that, your plans should also not only include where to go and what to do, but also the elements involved in determining when orders should be given, who should be giving those orders, and the procedures for assisting any guests or those with special needs who are present in your buildings and your facilities. And finally something a lot of people overlook, but that is a means for accounting for those personnel and others involved in the evacuation and making sure they are in the right place at the right time and they are safe and their wellbeing is being taken care of.

As I mentioned before, we'll focus on a number of both manmade and naturally-occurring threats. Here are a few to consider. One that may require some time and investigation, is what threats are posed by other organizations located nearby your facilities.

For example, our offices are located near a major local mall in the Charlotte area. And there is a U.S. senator who used to represent North Carolina in Washington, D.C. that maintained an office nearby. Some controversy arose around that senator and there were a number of protesters and demonstrations that took place right outside her offices. And that caused other
offices to have interruptions. Parking was nearly impossible and the roads were jammed up for about a half a mile in every direction.

So take some time to understand what other entities are operating nearby, and if they present any sort of threat that might interrupt your business.

Whether the threats are like the one I just mentioned, or they could be related to hazardous materials manufacturing or is storage of hazardous materials. You want to make that complete list. You can do that making a risk assessment using the tools on preparemybusiness.org. We recommend you visit that site.

Now once we know what threats we’re planning for, we need to precisely outline what should be in your plan. But before we put pen to paper, we thought it would be prudent to talk a little bit about who should be involved in this process. Now obviously you want the various managers and different departments involved, that way you cannot only best communicate the plan back to those employees, but also take into account any unforeseen complications that someone from a different department from you might be able to share.

Also on this list is anyone associated with managing your facility. They could be internal facilities managers or operations people. It could also be representatives from the building ownership or landlord if you’re leasing space.

Finally, it’s always a good idea to include human resources, your I.T. personnel, and communications personnel to ensure that those functions, which are critical to a recovery are also taken into account in your plan. Now if you do plan to establish a committee chairperson or a role that owns this aspect of your overall crisis strategy, it’s important to make sure that that person is familiar with the larger plan. Everything else that is going to be happening during a recovery.

You also want to make sure that they have the ability to thoroughly and properly assess the situation at hand at a moment’s notice and send out that critical information.

And most importantly of all, you want to make sure they have the authority to make life safety decisions, and decisions that could really affect the operational capacity of your operation. It may involve shutting down production. That person needs to have the authority to make those decisions.

Now each organization’s plan should be unique. Even from one location to the next. One bank branch on this side of the city may have a different plan than on this side of the city.

There are some approaches that every plan should include and we listed those here. You want a common approach. You want a consistent reporting method. You also want evacuation and shelter-in-place plans. You don't want to just practice evacuations for fires and think that’s it. There are other things to consider. You also need contact information for everyone who is in charge and in a leadership role.
And then we'll also want to focus on some documented procedures for shutting down critical equipment and operations so you can do that safely. And then you'll want to consider providing medical assistance, and most importantly helping those who have special needs during a crisis.

Now another question we get a lot from our customers and our members about these plans is related to "What is the best means of notification? How do we let people know what to do and how to do it? How do you make sure everyone receives this emergency notice? And how do you know that they're going to properly take the right steps? Or know exactly what to do based on the type or style of alarm?"

So these are just a few general recommendations for those alarms that should be used. For the most part, these will simply help you ensure that the alarm is applicable to everyone regardless of any visual or hearing impairment. And you want to make sure the alarm isn't subject to any power or network interruptions, that sort of thing.

Also, any alarm should automatically notify first responders, and most importantly you should be able to differentiate the different notification styles based on the type of crisis. If an alarm goes off, you don't want everyone in your office evacuating the building to outside if there's a chemical leak. You want them to shelter-in-place. So you need to have different alarms and notification systems to identify the threat and what action should be taken.

Now we know who and what should be involved. There are a couple of slides here that are helpful recommendations on getting started from a strategy standpoint for each plan.

For every strategy to have any hope of being successful, let's be honest. You want to help people avoid injury. You want to make sure they're committed to this testing of a plan. If no one knows the plan or they haven't practiced it, it is completely useless. So you must commit to a schedule of training and regular drills to make sure that people are familiar with the plan, especially new employees or guests that are on site for a period of time.

Also, just because you might have a few tests per year, that doesn't mean that new employees are going to be familiar with it. As I mentioned. So make sure that this part of your plan is incorporated into new higher orientation. And it includes some new high-level briefing on whatever your emergency plans are. You can give them a high-level overview and have your evacuation leader or departmental leader give that type of briefing.

Now in rolling out a new plan or even change your plan, we recommend that you go beyond just gathering everyone up and asking them to walk outside as part of a test. Help them understand the threats that they face. Help them know how to respond to different threats and also the different resources available to them. If there's emergency equipment in your building, for example, make sure they're trained on how to use it and when to use it.

So speaking of a lot of buildings will have emergency signage in place, as well as fire
extinguishers and other emergency devices like defibrillators. You can also ask the local fire marshal who can be an excellent resource for this part of your plan. They can also come to your office and do a basic safety assessment with you without the risk of receive anything sort of citation or fine. They're just there to help you improve your safety.

We always recommend having your entire staff also trained on CPR and first aid. You just really don't have any idea how valuable this is for every person to receive this instruction, both in their professional lives at work, or at home in their personal lives, at home or at school or church. It could save lives outside your office. Someone at the grocery store collapses and one of your employees is able to spring into action.

All right. Now that we have those things out of the way, we're really going to dive into the meat of each type of plan, beginning with evacuation planning. So when you begin your evacuation plan, there are some foundational elements that should be included, and we listed some of those here.

Having clear definitions of evacuation scenarios, ensuring a defined chain of command, and making sure to note any specific people involved in orchestrated the evacuations, that way everyone knows who they should be following.

Also, as you must already assume, you must have specific procedures for each location, including primary and secondary route. Just because your floor plan of your bank or your fast food restaurant or locations are identical in every branch office, that doesn't mean what is outside is the same in every case. Make sure they're location specific.

You should also invest in detailed maps that you've seen in stairwells, and bathroom doors, those are helpful for visitors, especially those who don't speak English as their first language. And those same maps should show the location of medical equipment. That's important with something that is a small fire. That equipment is easy to access if there is a small fire.

Now sticking with the theme of basic fundamentals, you can see a few more recommendations here. Establish a gathering area outside your facility where you can ensure that all of your employees or everyone from a given department will congregate regularly to allow a roster call to take place. Having those employee lists updated is an obvious next step. You want to have it posted in a place where you can grab it and go. It's important for a department manager or in the case of a floor warden, in the case of an evacuation, they need that list so they can properly assure that everyone is accounted for outside the building.

Now we recognize that not everyone works in a standard class A office. And there are situations where there are assembly lines and manufacturing processes and machines that operate regularly. You'll need to make sure that those critical systems and the processes are shut down safely in an evacuation scenario. You don't want to add to the danger of a situation especially for first responders by not having these dangerous manufacturing lines not shut down or cut off.

Now that being said, those policies and personnel should also undergo some rigorous and
additional training on how to safely shut down these operations and know how to determine when it is simply time to drop what you're doing and go. No building, no asset, no machinery is really more valuable than a human life. So make sure your people are properly trained to handle these situations.

Granted, if it's something that's safe enough that you can take the two or three minutes to shut down an assembly line, that's going to be preferable to just running away from it. But if there is an explosion, obviously you're not just going to stick around. It comes down to common sense, but you do want to have policies written down and in place.

Now when it comes to evacuation plans, most people are generally concerned about which routes to take out of a building or facility. But when determining those routes, be sure to maintain those routes properly. Pay special attention to the condition of hallways and corridors and stairwells. Make sure they're well marked and wide enough to accommodate the traffic.

Another big thing that we're seeing a lot of people doing is using these same corridors to store things. You need to keep these areas clear of obstructions and you have to be able to accommodate those with disabilities safely. All of these are concerns that not only should be noted during the planning stage, but also on an ongoing scheduled basis throughout the year.

For example, if you have a Spring evacuation drill and a Fall shelter-in-place drill, maybe a week prior to each of those you have your facilities people or whoever the office manager is trace those evacuation routes and make sure that the hallways and the pathways are clear. And they're monitoring those on a regular basis.

Now as we wrap up evacuation planning, here are a few best practices and quick reminders. First of all, if the evacuation itself is going to be long-term, be sure to account for guests who are planning to visit your organization or schedule deliveries that are due to take place in the next few days.

Same for example there is a building fire and you have to evacuate the building and there is no chance of you returning, you'll want to make sure there are no suppliers or vendor deliveries, even things like FedEx or the U.S. mail. Make sure they're aware.

And it's not just fires. This one resulted in shelter-in-place and evacuation orders.

In other situations, you might be called upon to not only evacuate your building but also the entire area. What would you do in those situations based on your organization's size and type and that sort of thing?

Finally, we always recommend that if your organization is a certain size or type, like a school or a university or maybe a large gathering place like a shopping center or theaters, anywhere the general public gathers, you should consult with your local emergency management entities to make sure your plans are complementary to what their response protocols are. You don't want to cause additional confusion or panic or even get in the way or encumber those
emergency response people in doing their jobs.

Some emergency responses will require shelter-in-place. You might get an energy alert or something like that. But regardless of where the order comes from, you need to have a plan in place that is practiced, it's drilled, and your staff knows it. Because it could be imperative to life safety. And this is one area that we don't see as many organizations actually putting a strategy into place and testing it.

So let's talk about what that plan should include. Because many organizations either as I said don't have a plan at all or they're doing a poor job of having an actually executable, safe plan. First, as we did when we worked on the evacuation plan, we talked about the scenarios that would dictate such an order.

But this time around, since we're talking about a situation where staff and employees and guests are being asked to take shelter for a possibly unknown amount of time, you'll need to have some emergency supplies on hand in the location that you determine as your emergency shelter area.

You can choose to have your disaster kit or go bag or first aid all in the same area that you plan to use as your shelter location. We'll be discussing in detail what should be in these disaster kits and emergency bags later on in the year. Pay special attention to preparemybusiness.org when we talk about those kits that you can build.

Now when it comes to choosing the location, you'll definitely want to spend some time discussing this with the team. The nature of many events, you're going to want an interior room possibly with the fewest ventilation components as possible. In a multi-floor building, you'll want to have more than one location identified depending on the threat. You'll want to be as low as possible during a tornado, but as high as possible if there's a toxic chemical leak.

The reason for that is many of these toxic chemicals are heavier than breathable air. They tend to settle in low-lying areas. You don't want to be in a basement in those types of situations.

You also want to look at the maximum people that you can shelter and add in the possibility of having some guests or vendors on site that may happen to be there during a crisis. Make sure that a number is known so you can determine the suitability of certain shelter sites and ensure that those rooms are big enough. Also remember there needs to be room to still house your emergency supplies. You don't want people to be forced to stand the entire time. You're going to want to avoid areas that have mechanical equipment or you're storing any other hazardous materials.

Also any other element that might present an additional danger beyond the initial cause of the order.
Also, take into account that cell phones may be useless during a crisis due to damaged infrastructure or overloaded networks. A land line is usually the preferred method due to the overtaxing of cell networks in a crisis. Maybe this is a room that has a regular old land line basic phone in there.

The last few elements to consider here include procedures for closing and securing the office. You want to have a policy and a procedure and you want to practice it with your employees who are responsible for jobs that have to do with these types of offices and these types of like machinery and things of that nature. If you're taking shelter say for example because of a large public disturbance at your facility, even if you're taking shelter in an interior room, you want to at least secure all the exterior exits to your building if possible before you go into the interior room.

Also you want to write into the plan that staff should forward their phones to an alternate location if they have time. You also want to notify energy response, basically call 9-1-1. And then if there's a chemical release involved, you want to shut down the HVAC system. You need to know where and how to do that quickly.

All of these steps are really only called for if it's safe to do it. If you're just having to rush somewhere, don't stick around to do these things if it could cause physical harm.

Now as you can see on the screen there now, if there is a chemical or hazardous substance that is literally released into the environment near your location, you're going to want toll try as best as you can seal all the doors and windows and shut down the HVAC system, as I mentioned. Therefore having plastic and tape in your emergency shelter location is a very, very good idea.

This may seem like overkill for pretty much all by the most dire situations, but remember even if the airborne threat is very minimal in nature, there could be people in your facility with breathing complications. You might just be saving someone's life by taking this kind of action seriously.

Now lastly we mentioned in the evacuation planning that there are processes and systems that should be shut down if it's safe to do so. And that same principle applies here. Think about a manufacturing plant where the machinery and the assembly lines need to be shut down. In most cases they have an emergency shut down switch of some sort. So make sure you take note of that. Also be sure to take into account the overall site and building security. Specifically those of you who are on the line today who are working for schools and universities. There are a LOT of additional concerns when it comes to a shelter-in-place strategy for larger organizations like that. But even small organizations should take this element into account, as well.

Also if you're moving staff, everybody, into an interior area, do what you can to secure any assets as part of the strategy. As I said, close and lock cash doors, cash registers, engage any emergency door locks or gates if you can. And lastly, do what you can to make sure that
the people you're protecting have a means of what's going on outside of the shelter area. If at all possible, you don't want these people left in the dark. I mean that literally.

Sometimes people in banks will congregate in the vault. And the power goes out and sometimes they're stuck in there for a long period of time. That might not be the best plan.

So once these plans are developed and they're written and you've debated these back and forth and you've actually started to implement the plans, the next step is testing them. Here is where the rubber really meets the road.

It's not just as I said gathering everyone together to walk outside when it's sunny outside. This should be a formal, recurring regular process. Our suggestion is to conduct drills at least twice a year. So for example, you could do a shelter drill in the Spring, because that's a time for severe weather in this country, tornadoes and whatnot. And then an evacuation drill in the Fall. That's a minimum recommendation. Having more often drills is certainly a positive. But you don't want your people to become immune to the emergency you're trying to create to the extent that they ignore an actual crisis.

You want to coordinate any drills with the management of your company, as well as the building management if you're leasing space that way someone is in the same mood.

We love realistic drills if at all possible. We bury our scenarios as much as possible to not only keep the interest of our staff, but also make sure people are prepared for different types of situations.

As another way of shaking things up, you can mix in some unexpected elements, like maybe block a primary exit during an evacuation drill. One key point, though, when I said block those exits, I don't mean physically block it with boxes and things of that nature. Instead have a member of your staff simply stand there with a sign that says this door is closed, the fire is here. The last thing you want to do is physically block something that you might actually need.

It's also a good idea to notify your neighbors of any planned exercise, especially in a place where you're going to be sounding a general alarm. You don't want to create unintended panic. Also, you want to do your best to accommodate your department's needs by avoiding busy times. Critical shopping hours or major deadlines. That's the last thing you want to do is interrupt someone's day when they're in the middle of a big meeting.

Because it's a test exercise, you want to actually monitor the results. You want to note any issues with the evacuation paths or any lack of supplies in a shelter location. Carefully monitor the time it takes to complete the drill. And work to improve that benchmark time over and over again during subsequent tests. And then finally, please make sure to discuss and debrief afterwards so that you could actually learn something and improve something. If you're simply just having your employees walk out of the building twice a year and you're not offering any feedback or any improvement, that was a wasted drill. You're basically just wasting 15 minutes of everyone's time. The point is to assess and improve the plan and in order to do so,
you have to identify those areas for improvement. You have to quantify your performance and monitor the implemented improvements.

Now one question we always get is whether or not to do a surprised drill or actually if it's better to have it planned. Now there are actually benefits to both and they each have merit. If you want to incorporate those into your testing plan. We actually suggest using each method for different reasons, though. If you're just now implementing a new plan, please just stick to the announced drills. That way your team can become acquainted with the strategy. But then later on you may be able to mix in an unplanned drill, that way you can better simulate actual real-life situations. We do not, however, recommend simulations during unannounced drills that incorporate special effects, things like smoke machines. That can create real harm, real panic.

And that is not your goal during a drill. Your goal is to improve the plan.

Okay. That's the bulk of our presentation today. I know we had a few questions. I would like to remind everyone if you would like to submit questions, you can do so by typing those into the GotoWebinar control panel.

Inless.

>> What are the most likely mistakes that organizations make during situations that call for evacuation or taking shelter?

>> SCOTT TEEL: First of all, I mentioned this earlier, I think one of the biggest mistakes is people simply don't have shelter-in-place plans or they're not testing that. It seems like since grade school we've all done fire evacuation plans. That's something we're all used to. But you don't hear about as many drills pertaining to shelter-in-place. The other thing that I think people don't do well and it is a big mistake, and that is not properly communicating with their, you know, the people that are on site at your facility what type of drill this is or what type of emergency this is. Because the last thing you want people doing again is taking shelter when it's an actual building fire or evacuating when the threat is actually outside.

So make sure you have a means of properly and effectively communicating the type of threat and what needs to be done.

>> So kind of going off of that, we have a similar question, specifically about visitors. They want to know how do we ensure that visitors are also helped to file out of the building or shelter in place?

>> SCOTT TEEL: There's a couple of ways to do that. First of all, if it's a planned drill, you can put signs up on your entrance areas to say today at 10 a.m. we plan to practice an evacuation drill. You're welcome to take part. The other thing is we talked about signage. So whether it's a drill or not, any visitors need to know what the most proper, most swift evacuation route is. And that's where signs play a big role. Think about every time you travel, you're going to a hotel. It's probably the first time you've been in that hotel. You don't know the most precise direction to go. That's why they have signs on the wall. The last thing I would recommend is we talked about having, you know, a leader of your evacuation or
shelter-in-place strategy. That leader may want to deputize a couple people who are responsible for guests. That way they know that should a drill occur, should an actual crisis occur, their job is to kind of ferry those people who are unfamiliar with the plan to the right location safely.

>> Excellent. One more question here. More specific to the type of location. So this is regarding a school. They want to know in the case of the school, what is the recommended way to notify parents of the children without causing unsafe conditions or having parents rush to the building.

>> SCOTT TEEL: Okay, this is a great way to talk about alert notification systems. In most cases, schools these days are adopting an automated alert notification system, which one of the leaders can activate remotely versus mobile device or through a computer system that they can broadcast out to the parents of the students at the school. Same thing at university. They can go out as e-mails or texts, as well as outbound telephone messages. You want to develop a strategy. And this is where it's important to incorporate local emergency response into your plan. Or look to your some of your peers in the industry or even in the immediate area on what the protocols should be. You don't want to cause mass hysteria and have hundreds of hundreds of parents showing up on the front lawns of your schools.

Where we don't have precise instructions because each school is different and each site is different. And everyone's assessment of the risks and threats is going to be slightly different. So we definitely recommend going through that process of assessing your risks and threats and talking about what the response should be incorporating some of those concerns.

>> Excellent. So I know we've gone a little bit over at this point. So we'll conclude the questions at this time. But anyone who is left with a question on here, we will respond via e-mail. And that will conclude the question portion.

>> SCOTT TEEL: Thank you again, everyone. We appreciate your attention to this matter. Again, these are webinars presented every single month. On behalf of SBA and Agility, we thank you for participating. We hope to host you again soon. Thanks and have a great day!

(The webinar ended at 2:34 p.m. Eastern Time)