Essential Positions Q & A

Following are some general questions and answers regarding business continuity and essential positions.

What is business continuity planning?
Business continuity planning involves developing contingency plans for remaining operational in the case of a major catastrophe. UNMC has identified the following eight specific types of catastrophes on which to focus planning efforts:

1. BIOLOGICAL - CHEMICAL – RADIOLOGICAL
2. FIRE
3. ICE – SNOW
4. PANDEMIC
5. POWER OUTAGE
6. SEVERE WEATHER
7. TERROR
8. WATER DAMAGE BY FLOOD OR OTHER

What is the primary focus of business continuity planning at this time?
Currently, the major focus is planning for a pandemic, since two of the three conditions for avian flu already exist with the H5N1 virus. UNMC’s primary focus during a pandemic would be to support The Nebraska Medical Center in its mission of delivering patient care.

What does it mean to be identified as essential?
If a position is deemed to be essential, it performs some type of duty that is required to keep the campus, or department, operational under a given catastrophe. A position can be identified as either “Campus Essential” or “Department Essential.” Campus Essential means that a position has duties that affect the campus as a whole such as, Security Officer, Utility Operator, Groundskeeper, etc. Department Essential means that a position has duties that are specific to a particular department. A position’s essential classification may change depending on the type of catastrophe.

What does it mean if my position is considered nonessential?
If your particular position is not identified as essential it means that depending on the type of catastrophe, and the availability of personnel to fill essential positions, you may be asked to stay home for your own safety, backfill an essential position that has similar job duties as yours, or staff the labor pool that will be used to backfill essential positions on an as-needed basis. Being identified as nonessential in no way reduces the value of a position’s contribution to the university. This designation is simply a function of the position’s responsibilities with regard to specific catastrophic events.

Why is it important to go through this identification exercise?
It is important that this information be accurately maintained so that effective business continuity planning in the case of a catastrophe can take place. Having the essential status of positions identified allows UNMC to identify where possible gaps could occur and potentially which positions could be used to backfill.

What type of support will people working during a catastrophe receive?
Human Resources is currently working on developing policies to address items such as pay, vacation leave, attendance, and volunteer labor pool. Other items such as food, personal protective equipment, maintaining open lines of communications, and security are also being addressed by the Business Continuity group.

How do I find out if my position is essential?
If you have questions about whether your position is essential or not please ask your supervisor.