

White Paper

# How Far is Far Enough?

The results of a survey concerning how far an alternate or offsite storage facility should be from the primary operations facility.

Conducted by:

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# White Paper - Survey Results

This paper is a compilation of survey information regarding the question:

## **"How far should an alternate or offsite storage facility be from the primary operations facility"?**

The survey was conducted and documented in July - August of 2002 by PreEmpt, Inc. The primary source of information was furnished by chapters of the Association of Contingency Planners (ACP). The survey results may also be viewed online at [www.PreEmptInc.com](http://www.PreEmptInc.com).

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## 1. Why The Survey Was Conducted

**Statement of Problem** – No industry standard has been established that specifies the distance (or methodology for establishing distance) that an alternate business continuation center or offsite storage facility should be from the Primary Operational Site.

The question is *non-trivial* and is a concern to BCP planners, management, auditors, clients, potential clients, and other stakeholders.

## 2. Who Participated In The Survey

To gather information for the survey, an email was sent to all presidents of the ACP chapters in the United States requesting their participation. The email requested that, if the chapter wished to participate, that the survey be emailed to all chapter members.

We would like to extend our thanks to the following chapters (*listed alphabetically*) for their participation:

- Arkansas
- Capital of Texas
- Greater Tampa Bay
- Northeast Florida
- North Texas
- Oklahoma
- Orange County, CA
- Utah
- Washington DC

## 3. Assumptions

For purposes of this survey, participants were asked to *assume*:

1. That they had only ONE alternate facility and ONE offsite storage facility, and
2. That their business was subject the following threat/risks:
  - a. Central Office
  - b. Civilian Airport
  - c. Earthquake
  - d. Flood
  - e. Forest Fire
  - f. Hurricane
  - g. Military Installation
  - h. Power Grid

- i. Snow/Sleet/Ice
- j. Tornado
- k. Tsunami
- l. Volcano
- m. None of the above

#### 4. Definitions:

**For survey purposes, the following definitions were used:**

**Primary Operations Facility** - The principal facility or site used for normal operations. The site that may be lost or become unavailable due to an event that interrupts normal operations. For business continuity purposes, the site that our planning efforts are addressing the loss of.

**Alternate Facility** - A predesignated facility or site that will be used for business continuation/recovery if the primary operations facility is unavailable (regardless of the cause). An alternate site may be for continuation/recovery of a business unit *or* a technical component.

**Business Continuation Inventory** - The material, special equipment, backups, documents, plans, and other items that would be required to continue to do business *or* recover business function, if the primary site is lost or becomes inaccessible.

**Offsite Storage Facility** - A site used to store business continuity inventory (on an ongoing basis).

#### 5. How The Survey Was Conducted

All surveys need a target audience for collection of data. In reviewing potential sources, we decided to ask for participation from the ACP chapters for a number of reasons:

- The group was definable *and* has an interest in the outcome of the survey.
- They were easily accessible and mailing lists were already in place.

However, the primary reason for selecting this group is that:

- This group practices business continuity on a daily basis.

For this reason, we felt the ACP members would provide better information and their responses would reflect real-world experience and first-hand knowledge.

To begin the information-gathering process, an email with a copy of the survey form was sent to all ACP chapters in the US requesting that the chapter participate in the survey. Assuming that the chapter elected to participate, we requested that the survey form be emailed to the chapter members with instructions to complete the form and return it to us by email. *See copy of survey.*

Completed surveys were received and compiled at our office. The results reflect data from surveys returned as of 7/31/2002. A total of 37 surveys representing 9 ACP chapters were returned and included in the analysis.

In answering the survey questions, all participants were asked to assume that they had only ONE alternate facility and ONE offsite storage facility. Additionally, they were asked to answer in all categories (not just the ones that apply to them) and to make their answers general and not specific to their industry.

Participants were asked to base their responses on the “Basic Rule” furnished with the survey instructions.

**Caveat:** The responses to distance questions ranged from a low of 5 miles to an upper limit of 1000 miles in certain categories. However, extreme responses were the exception and, to avoid skewing the survey results, the upper and lower 10% of responses in all categories were eliminated *before* the average calculations were made.

## 6. Basic Rule

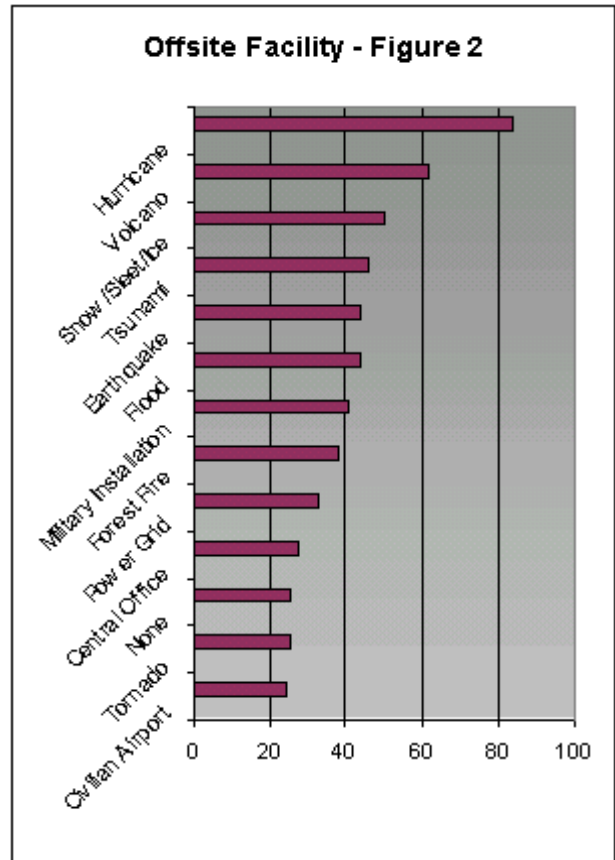
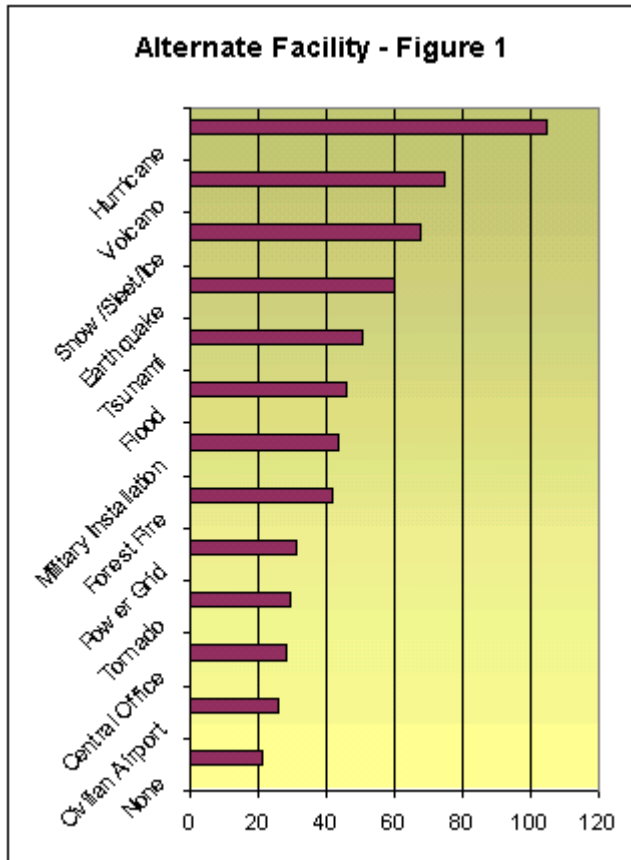
Survey participants were asked to use the following basic rule in formulating their responses to the survey.

### **Basic Rule**

An Alternate Facility or Offsite Storage Facility should be sufficiently far enough from the Primary Operations Facility to provide a comfort level to all interested parties that it would be reasonable to expect that the Alternate Facility or Offsite Storage Facility would NOT be destroyed, damaged, inaccessible, or unusable, due to the same event that caused the Primary Operations Facility to be destroyed, damaged, inaccessible, or unusable.

## 7. Distance Charts

We asked the survey participants to indicate how far an alternate or offsite storage facility should be from the primary operations facility assuming that their company was subject to the threat/risks listed above. An average of the responses is shown in the charts below. *Actual average numbers are shown in the distance table that follows the distance charts.*



## 8. Distance Tables

The tables below show the distance in miles that survey participants indicated should be the **minimum acceptable** distances between the primary operations facility and the alternate or offsite storage facilities.

### Distance from Primary Facility

*Figures shown are averages*

Threat/Risk	Alternate Facility Distance in Miles
Hurricane	105
Volcano	75
Snow/Sleet/Ice	68
Earthquake	60
Tsunami	51
Flood	46
Military Installation	44
Forest Fire	42
Power Grid	31
Tornado	29
Central Office	28
Civilian Airport	26
None of the above	21

Threat/Risk	Offsite Storage Distance in Miles
Hurricane	84
Volcano	62
Snow/Sleet/Ice	50
Tsunami	46
Earthquake	44
Flood	44
Military Installation	41
Forest Fire	38
Power Grid	33
Central Office	27
None of the above	25
Tornado	25
Civilian Airport	24

## 9. Same Occurrence of a Threat/Risk

One of the questions asked on the survey was whether it was ever acceptable for the alternate or offsite storage facility to be subject to the **same occurrence** of a threat/risk as the primary site. For the most part, participants said "NO". Results are shown below.

### Same Occurrence of a Threat/Risk

Threat/Risk	Alternate Facility % saying NO
Earthquake	97
Hurricane	97
Tsunami	97
Forest Fire	95
Power Grid	95
Central Office	94
Volcano	94
Flood	92
Military Installation	81
Civilian Airport	76
Tornado	76
Snow/Sleet/Ice	72**

Threat/Risk	Offsite Storage % saying NO
Forest Fire	89
Volcano	89
Tsunami	88
Earthquake	83
Flood	83
Hurricane	83
Power Grid	81
Central Office	80
Tornado	72
Civilian Airport	67**
Military Installation	66**
Snow/Sleet/Ice	64**

## 10. Physical Circumstances

Should standards for distance between the primary facility and alternate or offsite storage facilities be flexible, as in the nature of a guideline, or should they be rigid and immutable. Most of the survey participants felt that the distance **should vary**. The question asked was:

### Should distance vary based on physical circumstances?

Threat/Risk	Alternate Facility % saying YES	Threat/Risk	Offsite Storage % saying YES
Central Office	91	Earthquake	91
Earthquake	91	Tsunami	91
Forest Fire	91	Forest Fire	88
Civilian Airport	89	Power Grid	85
Power Grid	89	Volcano	85
Tsunami	88	Flood	85
Flood	86	Central Office	82
Tornado	85	Civilian Airport	82
Military Installation	83	Hurricane	82
Snow/Sleet/Ice	83	Military Installation	82
Volcano	82	Snow/Sleet/Ice	82
Hurricane	79	Tornado	82

## 11. Best Practices

The survey also included the following general questions concerning best practices.

### Alternate Facility

Issue	Question	% Yes	% No
<b>Same Building</b>	Is it ever acceptable for the alternate Facility to be in the same building as the primary operations facility?	8	<b>92</b>
<b>Same Campus</b>	Is it ever acceptable for the alternate Facility to be on the same campus as the primary operations facility?	27	<b>73**</b>

### Offsite Storage

Issue	Question	%	%
		Yes	No
<b>Same Building</b>	Is it ever acceptable for the Business Continuity Inventory to be stored in the same building as the primary operations facility?	11	<b>89</b>
<b>Same Campus</b>	Is it ever acceptable for the offsite storage Facility to be on the same campus as the primary operations facility?	23	<b>77</b>
<b>Mirrored Files</b>	Would the same answers to the above questions apply to files that are mirrored or replicated to a remote location?	<b>74**</b>	26
<b>Fire Resistant Vaults</b>	Would the use of fire resistant vaults change any of your answers?	9	<b>91</b>

### General

Issue	Statement	% Agree
<b>Widespread Threats/Risks</b>	The minimum acceptable distance of an alternate or offsite storage facility should be determined by the most geographically widespread threat/risk for which I have to plan.	<b>89</b>

## 12. Disagreement Threshold

\*\* Some of the survey results were less unanimous than others. While there was a clear majority in most cases, there were some categories that had what PreEmpt, Inc. felt was a significant disagreement. For purposes of analyzing the survey results, we felt that a threshold level of 25% in disagreement (one in four) was significant and should be used as a *caveat* when using the survey results.