Business Continuity Awareness Week is recognized worldwide and promoted by the Business Continuity Institute as a week for hosting events and activities and spreading resources and knowledge about continuity planning.

The theme for this year’s continuity awareness week was ‘testing and exercising,’ and the Northwestern University Business Continuity Planning Office promoted a different activity each day of the week with that in mind. Tuesday, the NUBCP office promoted a ‘flashblog’ where 22 different business continuity professionals all posted a blog talking about testing and exercising continuity plans. Wednesday the NUBCP office promoted a recorded webinar offered by the business continuity institute, ‘How to effectively use social media before and during disasters,’” and Thursday the NUBCP office hosted a brown bag luncheon for area continuity planning coordinators discussing the state of the program and the role of the continuity planning coordinator.

This newsletter issue is devoted to some of those events.

Testing and Exercising: Why is it essential to a BCP program?

For Business Continuity Awareness Week 2015, the Business Continuity Awareness Institute posed the question, ‘Why is testing and exercising essential to a BCP program?’ Several different entities provided answers from their perspective and individual needs, so we will take a moment to look at some of those responses.

According to FEMA (ready.gov), “you should conduct testing and exercise to evaluate the effectiveness of your preparedness program, make sure employees know what to do and find any missing parts.”

Some of the benefits of testing are: training personnel- clarifying roles and responsibilities, reinforcing knowledge of procedures, facilities, systems, and equipment, improving individual performance as well as organizational communication, evaluating policies, plans, procedures and knowledge and skills of team members, reveal weaknesses, ensure compliance with local laws and codes, and to gain recognition for the emergency management and business continuity planning program.

Jim Mitchell from eBRP solutions says, “just because all the relevant information has been catalogued doesn’t mean you can actually recover whatever it is you plan says you can” (http://www.ebrp.net/testing-business-continuity-plans-its-not-an-option).

This embodies the concept of testing and exercising: to gauge the strength of your continuity plan and to attempt to uncover unforeseen gaps and weaknesses. The best way to uncover weakness is to put it to the test; when in real action, what stands and what falls.

For more information on testing and exercising, contact the NUBCP Office: nu.bcp@northwestern.edu
Our annual Business Continuity Awareness Week brown bag luncheon focused on the state of the continuity planning program here at Northwestern University, the future trajectory of the program, and the role of the area continuity planning coordinator.

We were happy that some of our area coordinators came out to the luncheon, and were thrilled at the suggestion to host this type of event more than once per year.

The discussion amongst the area coordinators was helpful in identifying ways that the NUBCP Office can best support all areas of the University, and also helpful in identifying current gaps or potential weaknesses in the current state of our plans.

Our hope is that more of our area coordinators will be able to join us next time, and that these sessions can become a useful tool for area coordinators in providing extra resources or best practices uncovered by other functional areas of the University.

If you are an area continuity planning coordinator and were not able to make the luncheon, we are happy to send you a continuity planner’s handbook through campus mail. Email us at: nu.bcp@northwestern.edu.

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Spring Issue Spotlight:

SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

REPORT, STAY CLEAR

- Always report suspicious or unusual activity to University Police or local law enforcement
- Do not touch or disturb unknown or suspicious items
- Secure belongings and assets

Question of the Quarter:

Who is in charge during a crisis?

Do you know who is in charge within your functional area during a crisis? Does it depend on the nature of the crisis, or does your continuity plan identify a single person no matter what? Having a pre-determined person in charge helps communication move smoothly and helps to limit wasted resources when a plan needs to be put to use. Everyone should be familiar with who that person(s) are for their functional area.