Preparedness for Ansaphone Clients

Keeping in touch.

By phone:

1. Be sure that you have a ‘phone connection’ that allows call forwarding to be activated if you have no power. Your phone vendor can provide you with a telephone jack wired to your main telephone #. When necessary, a single line phone plugged into this jack will allow you to activate call-forwarding of your main line
2. If you use a forwarding feature through your phone system, be sure that you have instructions on how to activate this feature in case the person who is regularly responsible for this cannot get into the office, and another staff member needs to do this.

(**Provide these instructions to Ansaphone. We will keep them on file, should we need to ‘coach’ someone on your staff how to do this.)**

1. Make sure that you have an emergency contact list that includes your phone vendor and your telephone service provider. Also on this list, have contact #s for the utility companies that service your premise, your property management company, and the emergency #s for the municipality or city in which your office is located. (Do not rely on 911 as you may have to contact them from outside of your facility, and you should have a 10-digit # to contact municipal services, fire, police, and city or town offices such as Department of Public Utilities and Water Department.
2. Verify that Ansaphone has an ‘inside #’ that can be reached in your office when your phones are on forwarding to us.

Fax & email

1. Fax phone lines: If you are dependant and reliant on information that is usually received by FAX, consider opening a ‘FAX MAIL’ account with a vendor, to whom you can then forward your Fax #s if they are not working. This will allow your faxes to be received, and then ‘viewed on line’ or downloaded to a computer for later printing. (If your fax lines are not working, please be sure to notify Ansaphone at once so an alternative method of message delivery can be activated, either through email or texting to cell phones).
2. Please be aware that pagers, texting and faxing are services that require programming in our system. Changes to these services cannot be made during an emergency event. Phone numbers not currently in our databases will require manual dialing, and will slow down our ability to dispatch your calls.
3. Internet services may be disrupted during an outage as well, and email may not be available. Although we have all become very dependent on these electronic media, it is helpful for you to have alternative plans in place to redirect your email to an alternative address.

Instructions for Ansaphone

1. In the event that a decision is made to change your usual procedures, close your offices when they are usually open, or make changes in any way to your schedule, Ansaphone will need to know as soon as the decision is made by you. Do not wait until you are leaving your office to call in changes or new phone #s for your staff. **(Always keep your staff list and instructions up to date with Ansaphone.)**
2. Notify Ansaphone as early as possible about service disruptions or changes to your normal office schedule or procedures.
3. Be sure to provide a primary contact person, method, or # for notification of issues or clarification that may be needed.

STAFF and ON CALL PEOPLE

1. Verify that your staff list and contact #s are up to date, and complete. It is important that we have contact #s for your staff. We should have pagers, cell phones, and residence #s for any staff that we may need to reach.
	1. Frequently during an emergency situation, your staff cannot access information at your office, and will rely on Ansaphone for these #s. Even if it is a staff person whom we do not usually contact, it is helpful to have their information available in our database.
	2. Your staff can individualize the instructions on how we reach them.
		1. For example: John Jones, pager first, cell 2nd, res 3rd
		2. Another person could have: bill smith, res first, cell 2nd
	3. Be sure that escalation procedures are in place, in case the person we should be calling is not reachable
2. On Call staff should minimize their ‘cell phone’ usage in order extend the battery life in the instance of a power outage at their home. It is also helpful to have some kind of an emergency cell charger on hand that will give some additional time if your cell phone battery dies, and you do not have power. At least, you will be able to contact Ansaphone and update the method by which we can reach you.
3. Home phones: Many people no longer use a ‘house phone’ that does not require power. If you have a ‘phone jack’ at your home, you should have a ‘POTS’ (Plain Old Telephone Set), available to plug in. Even without power, a standard phone set will work on the power it receives directly from the telephone line. Cordless phones and extensions will require power to operate.
4. Be sure that planning in advance of an event, that Ansaphone has ‘contingent on call coverage’ that can be quickly put in place. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE EVENT TO DETERMINE WHO IS GOING TO BE YOUR POINT PERSON FOR COVERAGE. (During any emergency, our staff are busy handling your calls, and it will take extra time to pull someone away from call taking duties to do on/call entries and updates to phone lists if we do not have these already listed in our database)
5. Alert your staff, that they should make sure that pagers and cell phones are turned on, even if they are not the person on call or working at the time. See below for options that Ansaphone can provide to assist you and your staff.

Ansaphone Services and ways that we can help.

 During an emergency event, Ansaphone staff will strive to assist you and your callers. If we have the correct information in place before the start of the emergency event, it will make ensure continuous service to your callers and communication with your staff.

Staff notifications:

 Staff notifications: Ansaphone can set up group notifications to your staff notifications by email, text messaging to cell phones, and/or to groups of pagers. These notification lists need to be in place and ready to be activated should an emergency situation occur. In the event of a power loss at your office, you may want us to be able to send out notifications to your staff about office conditions, closings, or adjusted office hours. Please speak to Wil or Katie about setting up notification services if you wish.

 A special ‘staff line’ can be put in place to allow you to record specific announcements to provide specific announcements to your staff to keep them informed about the status of your facility, or any alerts you may wish. You may update your announcement as frequently as you wish. This is a good option to have in place for storm days as well, so that employees will have a number to call to find out about late openings, office closings, or whether they should venture out to keep appointments in the field. This # can be equipped with an operator override that would allow your staff person to either leave a voice mail for an administrator or to reach one of the Ansaphone staff operators to assist them.

Announcements:

 Ansaphone can customize the announcements that your callers will hear when they reach us. In the event of an emergency, it is often helpful to have the greeting changed to provide information on the changes in your routine, such as office closing, delayed openings or other event.

The more information you provide to us in advance, the better we can assist you and your callers. An announcement might inform your callers of an office closing, but also tell them that our operators will assist for any urgent situations or if they need assistance before you can resume your normal operations.

 Announcements can be customized to specific hours for which they are needed. There is some programming required here, so as much advance notice as to your decisions about these if helpful to allow our managers to respond.

 Most clients will already have in place alternative greetings which may be used in the case of a ‘weather emergency situation’ or a Holiday closing. These are usually general announcements that allow your callers to determine if they require assistance immediately, or can wait until the next office opening. These announcements help us to more smoothly handle those emergency calls while still provided up to date information to your callers about the current circumstance.

 Announcements can be customized depending on your specific needs and circumstance.

Disruptions due to a weather emergency or declared disaster may include any or all of the systems currently servicing your facility. These include power, phones, internet, transportation, heating, air conditioning and may require the evacuation of your premises. Disruption to services at homes may impact your staff’s ability to work or to report to work, and may limit their ability to communicate with you.

Many companies have extensive ‘Disaster Planning’ in place but have not considered how to cope with a **partial** disruption in their ability to operate as usual. Ansaphone has continued in service for more than 65 years, and can assist in your preparation and planning.