

The Government-commissioned report highlights serious failings and recommends business continuity planning to BS 25999 standards

Businesses, utilities and government agencies need to make significant changes to cope with the increased risk of flooding and other incidents according to the Pitt Report.

Sir Michael Pitt's independent, Government requested review into the floods of 2007 has made a wide-ranging number of recommendations considered vital to avoid future disasters.

One of the key recommendations to the Government in the report is to insist that many organisations undertake business continuity planning to a standard equivalent to BS 25999, with annual benchmark assessments.

Sir Michael said: "Research shows that the risk of flooding continues to escalate; making the events that shattered so many communities last year an ever increasing threat. I urge the Government to show leadership and urgently set out the process and timescale for improving resilience in the UK. The recommendations in my report are realistic and affordable and should be made a priority."

BSI Management Systems audits and certifies organisations in many industries against BS 25999, the Business Continuity standard. These include utilities and other Category 1 and 2 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act. BSI is leading the world in this field and has been working with the Pitt Review team in the Cabinet Office over the past few months to explore ways that businesses

can plan more effectively for disasters and disruptions.

One of the senior figures involved with BS 25999 and business continuity planning is BSI Management Systems Director Andrew Morris, who welcomes the recommendation in the Pitt Review.

"The widespread introduction of the standard, BS 25999 will have a key role to play in making the country safer".

He added: "I'm convinced that proper business continuity management needs to take centre stage in minimising the potential for disruption from future incidents, large or small.

"We are already working successfully with many local authorities and companies throughout the UK to offer certification to BS 25999 and facilitate best practice in business continuity management. We're now expecting an even greater number to heed the recommendations in the report and put measures in place to protect their business and ensure that they are acting responsibly."

Mr Morris pointed out that organisations awarded BS 25999 certification from BSI will have independent assurance that they meet business continuity management best practice.

This is important because the Pitt Review revealed that business continuity planning has been ignored

by many companies. It found that a third of all utility companies that responded to questions have not exercised or tested their business continuity plans at all, and that numerous companies across the UK are failing to provide adequate protection for members of the public and their key assets.

The report also raises important points covering the preparedness of individual companies and the delivery of a joined-up service before and during future incidents. The Pitt Review highlighted that infrastructure organisations across the UK are failing to provide adequate protection for their key assets, and therefore the public.

The industry-wide adoption of BS 25999 will help to ensure that not only individual companies are as prepared as they can be for a variety of incidents, but also that complex joined-up services are understood and protected.

Andrew Morris said: "Business Continuity plans and processes should not be designed or implemented on their own but should be created with an holistic understanding of all the other organisations with which they work. From now on reliance on a third party without independent verification of their abilities is simply not sufficient."

BSI's ability to certify many hundreds of organisations to the same standard provides a benchmark process where industry best practice can be demonstrated and perfected. As a result of the recommendations in the Pitt Review, it is likely that legislation will be enacted to mandate organisations to use BS 25999. For those

companies who have not yet taken action BSI recommends making an immediate start. Those who do not may quickly find themselves being asked painful questions.

There are many real benefits of certification to BS 25999 for organisations including:

- Assurance that an expert and independent review of business continuity management planning and processes has been undertaken.
- It demonstrates to regulators, customers and investors that hard won lessons have been acted upon.
- It helps to demonstrate to stakeholders, including insurance companies that business risk is taken seriously and is being run effectively.
- The regular assessment process will provide senior management with evidence of staff responsibility, commitment and delivery.

In summary, BS 25999 certification can improve overall performance, remove uncertainty and widen market opportunities for all organisations.

BSI sees certification to BS 25999 as a clear call-to-action from the Pitt review.

For further information about BS 25999 certification please call BSI Management Systems on 0845 080 9000

For the full Pitt Review visit http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/thepittreview/final_report.aspx

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