

## Monterey Bay Small Business Assistance and Resilience Program



Small businesses are the backbone of the American economy, accounting for nearly 50% of private-sector employment in the United States. In the Monterey Bay region, these small businesses are often minority owned, and located in small, often isolated rural communities. These small businesses are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, as they often lack the resources and infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events. The Monterey Bay Regional Business Assistance and Resilience Program was created to support small businesses that are impacted by storms and their aftermath. This program aims to help businesses prepare for and recover from disasters, as well as build resilience to future climate impacts.

### **Impact of Storms on Small Businesses**

Storms can have a devastating impact on small businesses. Flooding, loss of power, lack of access to customers, and damage to infrastructure are just a few of the challenges that businesses may face. These disruptions can result in lost revenue, damaged equipment, and a decrease in employee productivity. In some cases, businesses may be forced to close their doors permanently.

One of the most significant impacts of storms on small businesses is flooding. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), flooding is the most common and costly natural disaster in the United States. Small businesses are particularly vulnerable to flooding, as they often lack the resources to prepare for and recover from these events. Floodwaters can damage equipment and inventory, disrupt operations, and cause structural damage to buildings.

Another challenge that small businesses may face in the aftermath of a storm is a loss of power. Power outages can disrupt business operations, particularly if businesses rely on electricity to run critical equipment or if they are unable to process transactions without power. In some cases, businesses may need to temporarily close their doors until power is restored.

Lack of access to customers is another significant challenge that small businesses may face after a storm. Roads may be impassable, and customers may be unable to travel to businesses

that have been impacted by the storm. This can result in lost revenue and reduced cash flow for businesses that are already struggling.

Finally, storms can have a significant impact on the workforce. Employees may be unable to travel to work due to flooded roads or lack of power. This can result in decreased productivity and lost revenue for businesses. In some cases, businesses may need to temporarily close their doors until employees are able to return to work.

### **Impact of Climate Change on Small Businesses**

Climate change is causing more frequent and severe weather events, which are having a significant impact on small businesses. Extreme heat waves, droughts, and wildfires are just a few of the climate-related challenges that businesses are facing. These events can result in lost revenue, damage to infrastructure, and increased operating costs.

One of the most significant impacts of climate change on small businesses is extreme heat. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), heatwaves are becoming more frequent and severe due to climate change. Small businesses that operate outdoors or rely on outdoor spaces, such as restaurants and tourism businesses, are particularly vulnerable to extreme heat. These businesses may see a decrease in customers during hot weather, or they may need to invest in costly infrastructure to provide shade or air conditioning.

Droughts are another climate-related challenge that small businesses may face. Droughts can impact businesses that rely on water, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and hospitality businesses. Reduced water availability can lead to higher operating costs, decreased productivity, and lost revenue. In some cases, businesses may need to shut down entirely if they are unable to access sufficient water.

Wildfires are also becoming more frequent and severe due to climate change. Small businesses in areas prone to wildfires may face damage to infrastructure, loss of inventory, and decreased revenue due to decreased tourism. In some cases, businesses may be forced to shut down entirely if the fire damages their property or if they are unable to access customers.

### **Building Resilience for Small Businesses**

The **Monterey Bay Small Business Assistance and Resilience Program (Assistance and Resilience Program)** recognizes the urgent need to build resilience among small businesses to withstand the impacts of storms and climate change. This program offers a range of services to help businesses prepare for and recover from disasters, as well as build long-term resilience. Some of the key components of the RBRP include:

**Business Continuity Planning:** The Assistance and Resilience Program will offer resources and support to help small businesses develop and implement business continuity plans. These plans can help businesses identify and mitigate potential risks, as well as develop strategies to maintain essential business functions during and after a disaster.

**Disaster Recovery Assistance:** The Assistance and Resilience Program will offer assistance to small businesses impacted by disasters, including help with accessing financial assistance, insurance, and other resources. This can include assistance with applying for loans, grants, and other forms of financial assistance to help businesses recover from losses incurred during a disaster.

**Training and Education:** The Assistance and Resilience Program will provide training and education to small businesses on disaster preparedness and resilience. This can include workshops, webinars, and other resources to help businesses understand the risks they face and develop strategies to mitigate those risks.

**Infrastructure Improvements:** The Assistance and Resilience Program will offer assistance to small businesses to make infrastructure improvements that can help them withstand the impacts of storms and other disasters. This can include help with retrofitting buildings, installing backup generators or other equipment, and other measures to improve the resilience of businesses.

**Community Engagement:** The Assistance and Resilience Program will work closely with local communities to build partnerships and engage with small businesses. This can include outreach and education programs to raise awareness of the risks posed by storms and climate change, as well as community-based initiatives to support small businesses during and after disasters.

The Assistance and Resilience Program is just one example of the efforts being made across the country to build resilience among small businesses. Governments, non-profit organizations, and other groups are working to provide resources, support, and education to help small businesses prepare for and recover from disasters. Some of the key strategies being used to build resilience among small businesses include:

**Insurance:** One of the most important steps small businesses can take to build resilience is to purchase adequate insurance coverage. This can include coverage for property damage, business interruption, and other risks that may arise during a disaster.

**Risk Assessment:** Small businesses should conduct regular risk assessments to identify potential hazards and develop strategies to mitigate those risks. This can include identifying critical business functions and developing contingency plans to maintain those functions during and after a disaster.

**Infrastructure Improvements:** Small businesses can make infrastructure improvements to help them withstand the impacts of disasters. This can include installing backup generators or other equipment, retrofitting buildings, and other measures to improve the resilience of businesses.

**Community Engagement:** Small businesses can work with local communities to build partnerships and engage with other businesses and stakeholders. This can include participating in community-based initiatives to support businesses during and after disasters, as well as engaging in outreach and education programs to raise awareness of the risks posed by storms and climate change.

## **Conclusion**

Monterey Bay small businesses are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of storms and climate change, which can result in lost revenue, damage to infrastructure, and increased operating costs. However, efforts are being made across the country to build resilience among small businesses and help them prepare for and recover from disasters. The Monterey Bay Regional Business Assistance and Resilience Program is just one example of the resources and support available to small businesses. By working together, governments, non-profit organizations, and small businesses can build a more resilient and sustainable future.