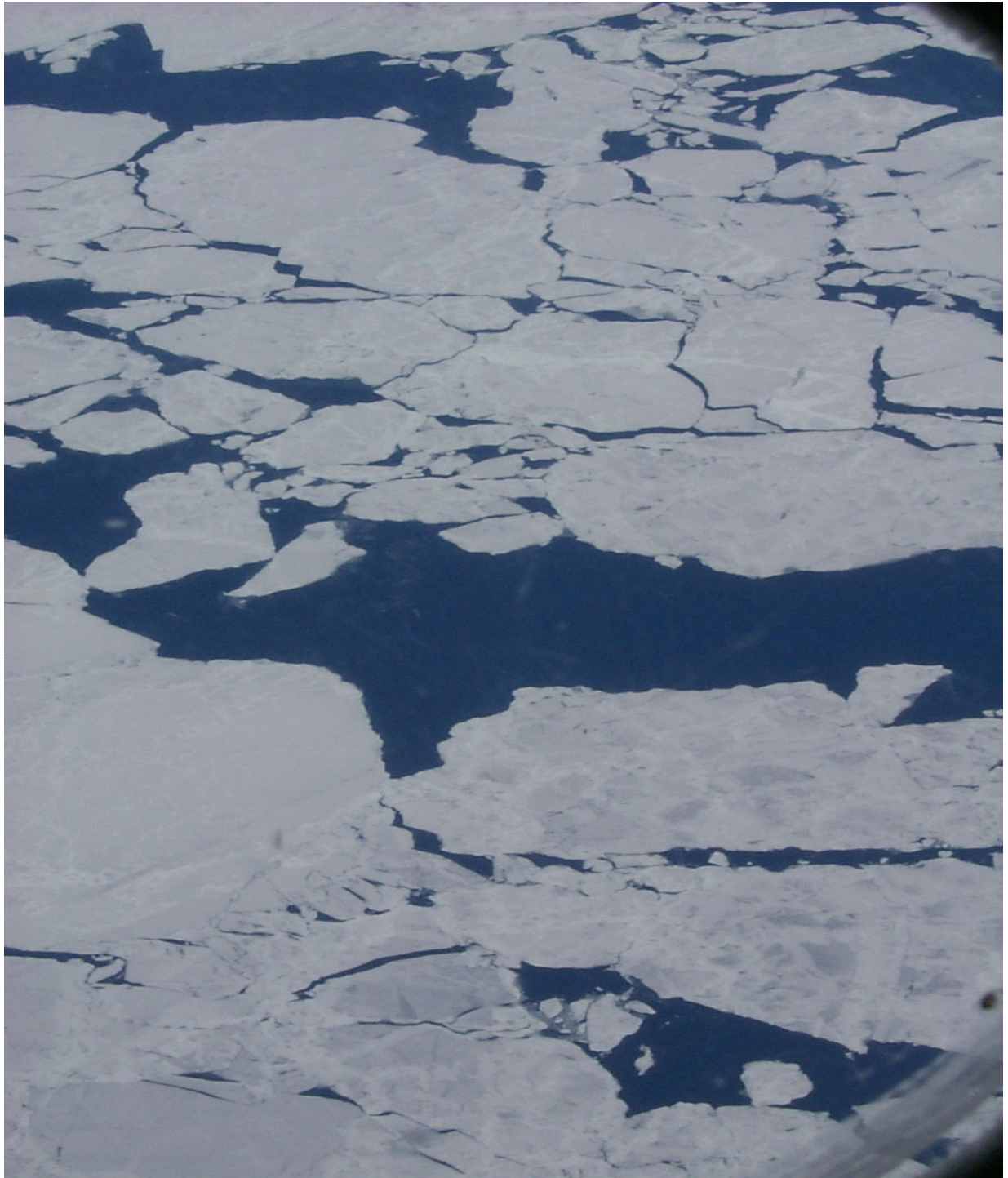


Thin Ice – the continuous survey of business interruptions



Thin Ice – back by popular demand!

Thin Ice – the continuous survey of business interruptions

We make no claims that the information presented here is an exhaustive survey of all business interruptions that a number that have occurred during the current survey "window". We mainly use information from the public domain and therefore do not include many of the disruptive events that doubtless do occur within companies but are not reported in the general media.

The Economy

We're not going to dwell on the Iceland volcano situation in this edition, (strictly speaking, it occurred in April and so falls outside of our reporting period anyway).

What I would like to reflect on is a wider, more pervasive and potentially more disruptive threat – the economic situation. During March we logged significant business interruptions due to strikes and associated civil disturbances in Greece. These were primarily due to public dissent and objection to the potential economic measures that their government might be forced to implement in order to get Greece's public finances under control to the satisfaction of their creditors and the global capital markets. Greece is generally acknowledged to be Europe's "basket case" economically speaking, but the ramifications of its problems and the impact of a potential default have wide ranging economic implications. But I'm not an economist, but from the perspective of business continuity, I can see issues arising from high levels of public dissatisfaction related to the economic measures that Greece (and some other Mediterranean countries) might be forced to take.

The threat I see, is industrial action and civil disturbance when the formally "silent majority" decide to publically express their outrage draconian economic measures that their political leaders may be forced to take. The situation in Greece has proven that the general public will take to the streets to express their dissatisfaction with the actions of politicians. There are many variables that would have to come into play before we had extended rioting and industrial action in all major cities around the world that were rooted in dissatisfaction with the economic situation in that country. However, Greece has set a precedent and it could happen elsewhere.

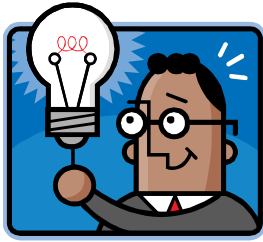
So what threats should we be thinking about responding to:

- Your firm or industry being made a scapegoat in the media. Financial firms, particularly investment banks, bear the blame for some of the world recession. Firms that do well because of windfall profits made in rising commodity markets (i.e. oil) may also receive unwelcome accusations of "profiteering" when others are suffering. The unwelcome media attention could result in their business premises offices becoming targets for "retribution".
- Government offices under threat as activists look for a physical target to draw attention to their activities;
- Swinging cuts in government funded IT projects, potentially compromising resilience and security;

My advice to Business Continuity Managers; Instigate an "environmental scan" to take the pulse of public reactions to economic news so that you are prepared to respond. Start monitoring the financial press for country economic news together with major news sites such as the BBC and CNN.

Business Interruption Incidents: April 2009 December 2009

Buildings/Infrastructure Damage	3
Burst Water Main	0
Civil Disturbance	2
Earthquake	2
Explosion	3
Fire	22
Flood	7
Hacking	0
HazMat Incident	3
Industrial Action	3
IT Systems Failure	12
Malicious Software	7
Other	0
Power System Failure	14
Public Network Failure	10
Public Transport Disruption	5
Temporary Evacuation	12
Terrorist Attack	0
Utility Supply Failure	1
Vandalism	0



Bright Spark – Tools, workarounds and shortcuts for the cash strapped BCM

Twitter – part of our portfolio for Incident Management?

Although I consider myself “tech savvy”, I have to admit as far as social networking and Twitter in particular go, I just didn’t get it – particularly in a business context. I just could not see how “Tweeting” had any place at all in a commercial context. So, when I saw an example of Twitter being used for customer communication in a business recovery context I decided to dig a little deeper – particularly as Twitter is free, which fits nicely with the theme of this part of the newsletter. Most people know what Twitter is and the basics of how it works: you have a Twitter account, you post messages (called “Tweets” and some people “follow” you (if they’re interested in what you are posting). Unlike blogging, Twitter restricts you to publishing quick, frequent, 140 character messages. Your “followers” then pick up alerts via their Twitter home page, their elected email account or their mobile telephone, if the phone and their network provider support it. That’s all well and good, but what’s the point of it in a business context?

This week I got my answer. During the course of gathering updates to our business interruption statistics database, I came across an interesting news article that lead me to a little further research, that I thought I should share with the readership of Continuity Central: the news item related to a power failure that hit an IT Services company called Codero, based in Phoenix in the USA. What sparked my interest was that they used Twitter as a means to keep their customers informed of progress and to deal with specific customer issues during the recovery phase. The firm has to recover hundreds of servers and some customers (as you might expect) had more problems than others in getting back up and running. Much of the customer interaction (and the logging of it) was managed via the company’s Twitter account.

So why was Twitter a good way for Codero to support and communicate with it’s customers during its recovery activities? A little further research shows some real advantages of using Twitter in this way:

1. Those who want to follow you just need to set up a twitter account themselves and then opt to follow you. Therefore you don’t have to remember or maintain contact details for each of your customers.
2. The person following your tweets can also elect to receive updates to an email address of their choosing or their mobile telephone. The “tweeter” has no need to know *where* to send the message the receiver chooses the delivery media according to their needs and preference;
3. The Direct Message (DM) facility allows a “tweeter” and a follower to have a private conversation that’s not on the public message log which is displayed on the “tweeters” Twitter website.

Twitter also maintains a complete history of Tweets and follower responses, so when the dust dies down you have a log of all of the conversations as a record of your customer conversation via Twitter.

So, to implement a customer communications channel in the event of a major incident you now have 6 simple steps to implementing a basic mass communications tool for incident management:

1. Open a Twitter account for your Company
2. Decide which individuals will create “Tweets”;
3. Advise your customers in advance that you have set this up and advise them to create their own Twitter accounts;
4. If an incident strikes:

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- i. Send a Tweet via the Incident Management Twitter page to alert the Incident Management team;
 - ii. Have a procedure in place to update your website and any pre-recorded message service to announce that you are in Incident Management mode and direct visitors and callers to go to your Twitter page where they will be able to see updates at the time they occur;
5. Even if a caller or visitor does not have a Twitter account they can be set up in minutes (the Twitter help is quite good in this respect);
6. Send Tweets as and when required and your customers will be fully informed of events as they occur, receiving the updates on the device and channel of their choosing.

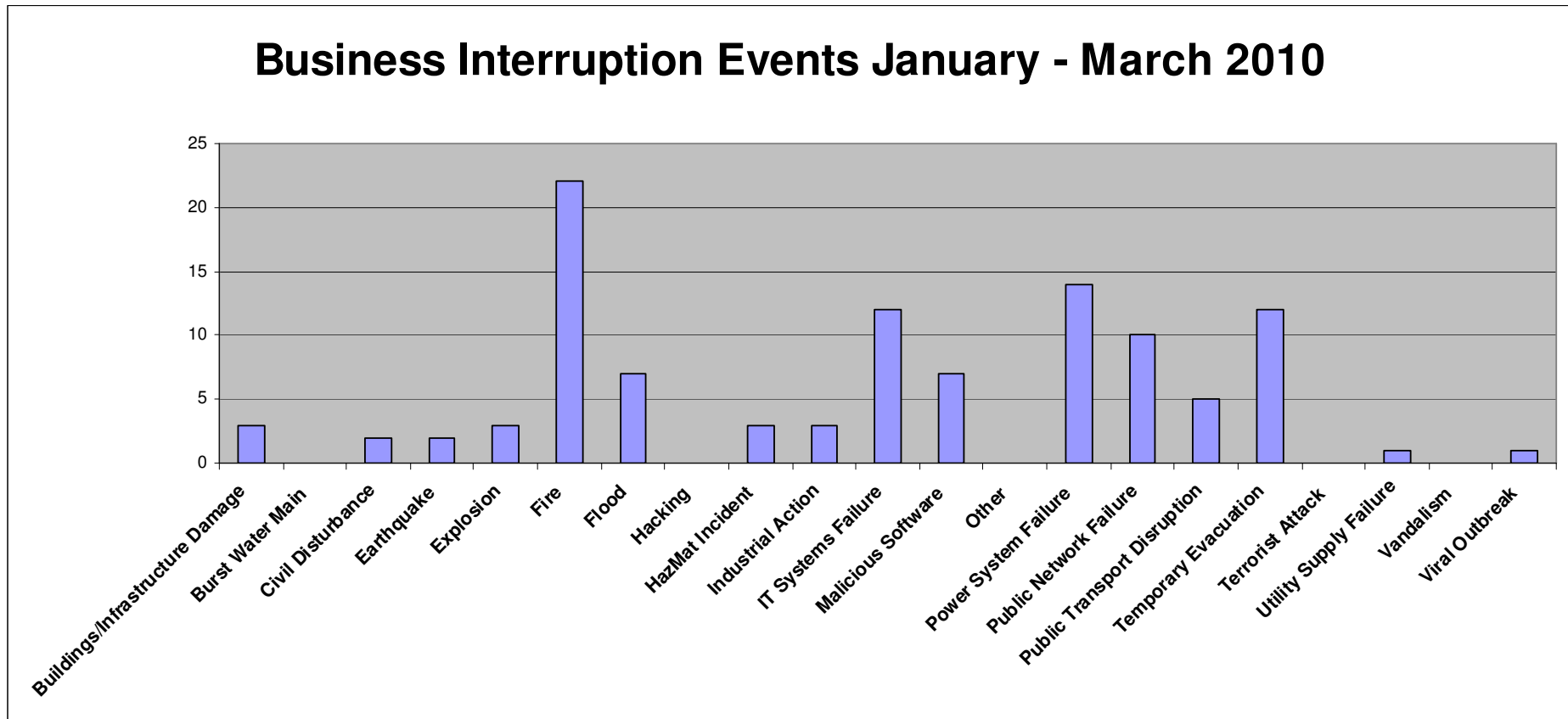
You could, of course, set up another Twitter account for the specific use of the Incident Management team to help them communicate with each other. Here you set up an Incident Management Twitter account that all members of the incident management can update it as well as follow. This way anyone in the team can create a “Tweet” that can be received by all other members of the team.

Does this spell the end of the Incident Notification system? Probably not for everyone (although it is a good *public* communications tool) and there are a few “bells and whistles” that might be important to some that it does not have. But Twitter, of course, is free which raises standard in what needs to be available to warrant a paid for solution. Basically we’ve seen from a live example that Twitter, a free social networking system, can be used as an effective tool in a corporate incident management situation. It has quite unique features that are provided by the principle of “Following” that support low maintenance communication and interaction with a large audience which make it suitable for many types of organisation:

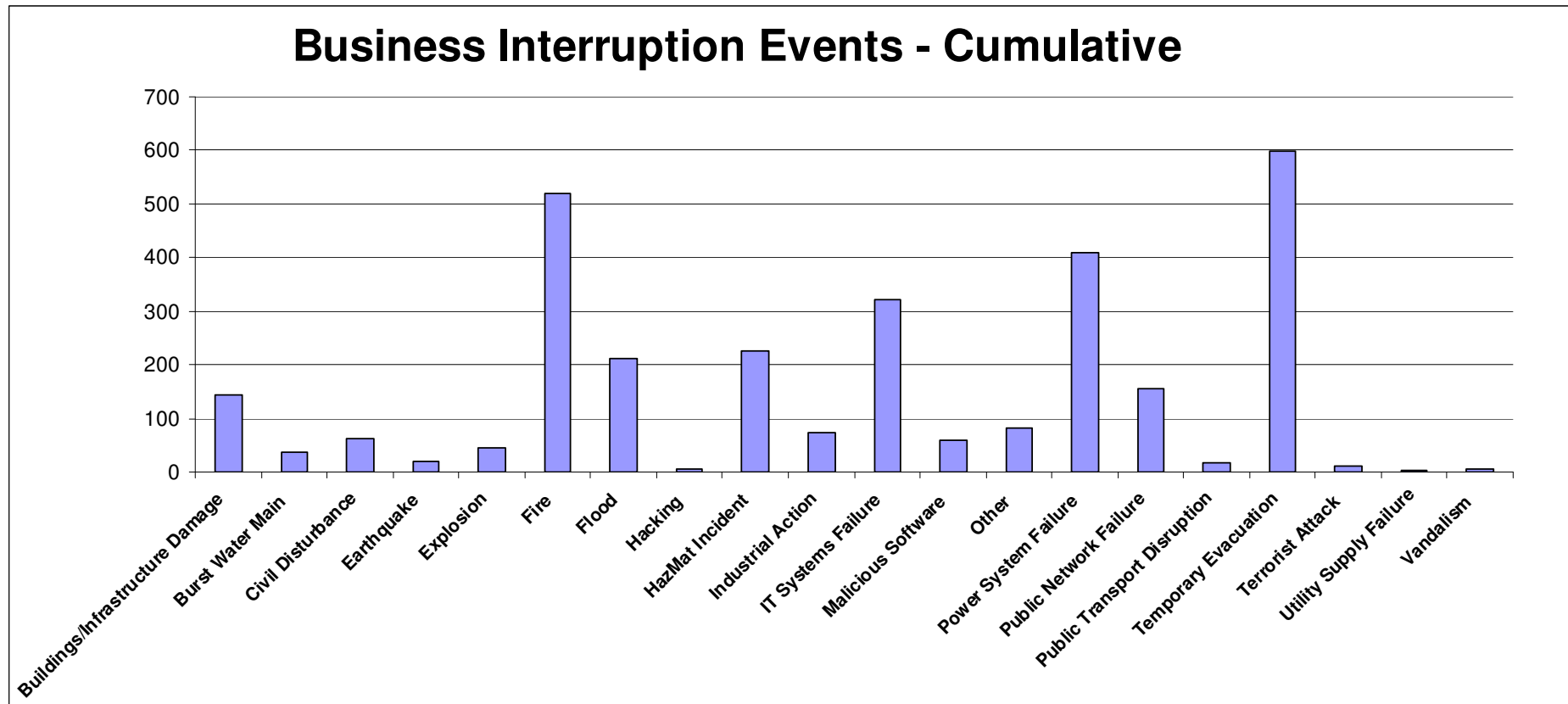
- All types of commercial organisation could use it to communicate with their customers during an incident;
- Local government organisations could use it to provide community updates for different types of emergency;
- Diverse, geographically separated teams can communicate and collaborate without the need for specialised applications and devices.

Much of the log still remains on the Codero Twitter page and it makes interesting reading (You’ll also see how you can click on a “Tweet” and link to the follower’s response that initiated it).

To see the log on Codero’s Twitter page, follow this link to the [Codero Twitter page](#) .



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Interruption	Country	Synopsis
Fire	USA	Power outage hits ski resort
Public Transport Disruption	China	Record snowfalls disrupt Beijing
Public Transport Disruption	South Korea	South Korea hit by record snowfalls
IT Systems Failure	Germany	Technical glitch kills German bank card systems
Public Transport Disruption	UK	Snow storms hit transport systems & infrastructure
Power System Failure	China	Freezing temperatures force power rationing
Flood	USA	Burst pipe closes basement floor of department store
Other	UK	Hospital wards closed following virus outbreak
Power System Failure	South Africa	Substation failure plunges city into darkness
Public Transport Disruption	UK	Snow storms hit roads and public transport systems
Explosion	USA	Steel plant explosion
Utility Supply Failure	Ireland	Extreme weather hits water pipes & impacts homes & businesses
Civil Disturbance	Italy	Race riots close commercial operations
Temporary Evacuation	Kuwait	Bomb hoax closes Kuwait Bourse
Explosion	Nigeria	Attack on pipeline disrupts oil production
Power System Failure	USA	Sub-station fire causes power cut
Flood	UK	Frozen water main burst and causes floods affecting homes and businesses
Fire	UK	Fire damages supermarket
HazMat Incident	Australia	chemical spill closes factory
Explosion	UAE	Electrical explosion hits businesses
Viral outbreak	UK	Virus outbreak shuts hospital wards
Flood	USA	Storm triggers mudflows forcing evacuation of homes & Businesses
Public Transport Disruption	India	Dense fog disrupts flight operations at Delhi airport
Public Network Failure	USA	Human error blamed for Verizon disruption
Industrial Action	India	Workers strike at mobile telephone factory
IT Systems Failure	USA	Government office computer systems fail

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Fire	USA	Car show evacuated following localised fire
IT Systems Failure	Hong Kong	Hang Seng Index system fails
Malicious Software	UK	Virus attack cripples university network
IT Systems Failure	South Africa	Airline website fails
Fire	UK	Fire causes evacuation of oil rig
Public Network Failure	New Zealand	Mobile phone network fails
Public Network Failure	USA	Fibre optic line damage suspends voice and internet services
Buildings/Infrastructure Damage	New Zealand	Storm damages buildings and closes roads
Public Network Failure	Malaysia	Damaged Underwater Cable Circuit disrupt national internet services
IT Systems Failure	USA	Major bank's website fails
Public Network Failure	New Zealand	Telco's mobile network fails for three days
Power System Failure	USA	Blizzard downs power lines
Malicious Software	USA	Virus hits university IT Systems
IT Systems Failure	USA	Credit Card Processor loses authorisations system in fire
Buildings/Infrastructure Damage	USA	Mudslide threat forces evacuation of homes and businesses
Power System Failure	UK	Network fault causes power failure
Fire	USA	Fire destroys retail outlets
Malicious Software	UK	Conficker virus hits police computers
IT Systems Failure	UK	UK Bank ATMs and online services knocked out
Malicious Software	India	Major outsourcer's website hit by cyber attack
Buildings/Infrastructure Damage	USA	Winter storm paralyses cities
Civil Disturbance	Greece	Tax rise demonstrations close businesses and disrupt public services
Flood	Uruguay	Floods swamps towns and cut power and water supplies
Fire	USA	Fire destroys business premises
Power System Failure	Australia	power failure hits homes & businesses

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Flood	USA	Businesses hit by fire and resulting water damage
Temporary Evacuation	Canada	20,000 evacuated as old war bomb defused
Public Network Failure	USA	Network operator's network failure hits social networking sites
Industrial Action	France	Protesting workers forced stores to close
Temporary Evacuation	USA	Ruptured gas line forces evacuation o businesses
Malicious Software	USA	Virus hits credit union website
Temporary Evacuation	USA	Bomb threat forces evacuation of regional airport
Temporary Evacuation	USA	gas leak forces evacuation of clinic
IT Systems Failure	UK	Council It systems hit by equipment breakdown
Temporary Evacuation	USA	Fire forces evacuation of manufacturing plant
Temporary Evacuation	Indonesia	Campus evacuated after bomb threat
Temporary Evacuation	USA	Bomb scare forces evacuation of government offices
Temporary Evacuation	USA	Brief evacuation, false alarm at airport
Power System Failure	USA	Power failure hits bank ATM system
Fire	USA	Fire destroys five businesses
Malicious Software	Worldwide	Virus hits corporate & government computers
Power System Failure	USA	Snowstorms take out power supplies
Fire	USA	Fire destroys factory
Fire	USA	Record company studios & archives gutted by fire
Fire	USA	Major department store evacuated following discovery of fire
Fire	USA	Fire guts building and severely damages two more
Fire	USA	Fire guts restaurants
Public Network Failure	UK	Snowstorm disrupts broadband links
Power System Failure	USA	Snowstorms hit power supply & public transport
HazMat Incident	USA	Business evacuated following ammonia leak
Power System Failure	USA	Winter storms knock out power supplies
Public Network Failure	New Zealand	Cable fault hits cell p[hone provider
Earthquake	Taiwan	Taiwan Earthquake Damages Undersea Internet Cables
HazMat Incident	USA	Chemical spill causes evacuation

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Earthquake	Taiwan	Quake disrupts LCD panel production in Taiwan
IT Systems Failure	USA	Software failure forces shutdown medical system
Public Network Failure	UK	Snow storms hit broadband services
Fire	Canada	Fire destroys food processor factory
Fire	USA	Oil refinery hit by fire
Flood	Australia	Floods hit towns in NSW
Fire	USA	Fire hits electronics recycling plant
Fire	UK	Fire damages office building
Fire	UK	Nightclub gutted by fire
Fire	USA	Fire forces evacuation & Closure of shopping Mall
Malicious Software	USA	Computer virus hits small businesses
Power System Failure	USA	Power outage hits hosting company
Temporary Evacuation	USA	Gas leak forces evacuation of businesses
Temporary Evacuation	USA	Supermarket evacuated following kitchen fire
Fire	USA	Fire destroys several floors of bank branch
IT Systems Failure	USA	Schools computer systems crash
Temporary Evacuation	USA	Gas line break forces evacuation of office building and surrounding businesses
Fire	Ukraine	Fire hits fabrication factory
Industrial Action	UK	Strike hits major UK airline
IT Systems Failure	Ukraine	Storage Network failure hits city council
IT Systems Failure	Bangladesh	Telecommunications regulator shuts down VoIP services from 18ISPs
Power System Failure	UK	Power cut hits homes and businesses
Power System Failure	South Africa	Multiple power outages hit businesses
Public Network Failure	London	Equipment fault at telephone exchange causes fire & flooding
Power System Failure	UK	Snow storms knock out large parts of electricity network
Fire	UK	Fire destroys garden centre
Fire	USA	Fire destroys chemical warehouse
Flood	USA	Floods hit thousands of homes & businesses

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