



Will Falling Meteors or Bedbugs Impact your Business?

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It's a little late to be wishing each other a happy new year. But we'd probably still be doing so if most of us had realized that this year had barely started, when, on January 9th, Earth was almost hit by a small Asteroid known as 2017 AG13 (small being a relative term --- the asteroid was about the size of Drake's new house in Toronto.) Luckily, it streaked by us at 57,600 kilometers per hour and missed Earth by about 160,000 kms.

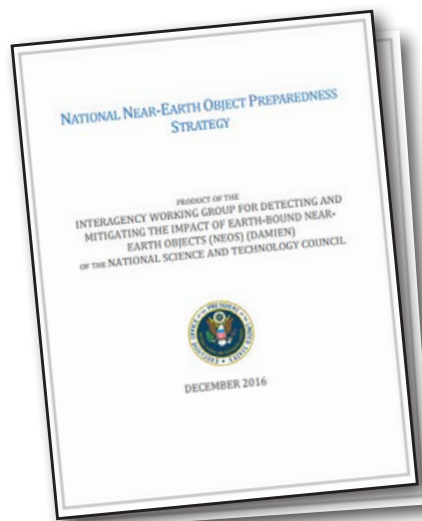
An asteroid known as 2014 JO25, was discovered three years ago by astronomers at the Catalina Sky Survey near Tucson, Arizona. It flew past Earth on April 19, 2017 at a distance of about 1.1 million miles (1.8 million kilometers), or, to put this distance in perspective, about 4.6 times the distance from Earth to the moon. This was considered very close to Earth for an asteroid of this size.

In addition to asteroids, other things from our atmosphere like comets, spacecraft (excluding airplanes) are called by definition 'Near-Earth objects' (NEO). The Space Shuttle Challenger disaster occurred on January 28, 1986 when its fuel tanks broke apart 73 seconds into its flight, leading to the deaths of its seven crew members. The Space Shuttle Columbia disaster occurred on February 1, 2003 during its re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, disintegrating over Texas and Louisiana. Skylab was a space station launched in 1973 and operated by NASA and in 1979 it uncontrollably re-entered Earth's atmosphere and disintegrated with debris striking portions of Western Australia. The Russian Mir space station operated in low Earth orbit from 1986 to 2001 and in March, 2001 was removed from space and disintegrated when it reached the earth's atmosphere. What about the International Space Station operating in low Earth orbit with its life expectancy potentially occurring in 2028?

According to Wikipedia, various asteroids worthy of monitoring, with close approaches to Earth in the past 10 years, are estimated at 250, with 62 alone in 2016 and already 5 in 2017. As of August 2012, 850 near-Earth asteroids larger than 1 km have been discovered, but only 154 potentially pose a problem to Earth. NEO's rarely make

the list of risks or threats a typical business gets concerned over. If they did, we would also need to include others, such as Earth being attacked by aliens and zombies. It was a 16 km. wide asteroid that is believed to have led to the extinction of the dinosaurs on earth

Thank goodness for NASA's Near-Earth Object Program Office, which has in place a tracking system called 'Sentry,' a highly-automated collision monitoring system for continually updating the orbits, future close Earth approaches and Earth impact probabilities for all Near-Earth Asteroids (NEAs). Searching the heavens for Asteroids worth tracking requires very specific criteria, or they are considered non-asteroid threats. NASA has a congressional mandate to catalogue all NEO's that are at least 1 kilometer wide, as the impact of such an object would be catastrophic, if only for the potential to destroy our orbiting networks of communications and weather satellites.



While the probability of such occurrence is low, the potential impact is very high, and mankind does not have reliable controls in place to mitigate or eliminate such a risk, except a plan of sorts issued by the Executive Office of the President of the United States (dated December 2016) entitled The

National Near-Earth Object (NEO) Preparedness Strategy, which builds on efforts by NASA to provide better 'early detection' and categorize the NEO's and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) effort needed to prepare for and respond to an NEO impact. This document which makes for interesting reading can be found at: http://cdn.defensedaily.com/wp-content/uploads/post_attachment/152560.pdf

A crisis can be defined as any unplanned event, occurrence or sequence of events that has a specific undesirable consequence. Emergency preparedness planning typically addresses reactively a full range of threats and hazards, including domestic terrorist attacks, natural and man-made disasters, accidental disruptions, and other emergencies. Business continuity on the other hand can take a ‘consequence based’ approach, which requires attention not just to specific types of hazards, but also to steps that increase preparedness for any type of probable hazard.

Business Continuity practices teach us to identify known risk and threats that have to be planned for (mitigated) to avoid business impacts. This approach is known as ‘all-hazard’ risk planning and works well with the obvious, repetitive risks and threats. But how do you plan for what is unknown or unlikely to occur?

Experienced Business Continuity practitioners have come to understand most known predictable business risk and threats and associated mitigation strategies. However, they cannot predict the future or the low probability of other risk events from occurring, such as asteroid, spacecraft falling out of the sky.....or are they now more predictable based on recent events?

Now, the probability of bed bugs infesting your business has a higher chance of occurrence in coming years than asteroids hitting your office building. Bed bugs are becoming a growing problem across Canada and North America, in part due to global travel and the increasing restrictions on insecticides. Bed bug infestations are spreading at an increased rate, with high exposure in many public forums.

Bed bugs are transferred from sites by most mediums – fabric, paper, plastics. Due to the ease of transfer, bed bugs have shown up in all areas, from high-end hotels, to movie theatres, to public transit. Bed bug infestation is a newer risk that now needs to be assessed with the other more obvious risk and threats.

Use a simple and practical approach to risk management to consider the probability the threat will materialize and the impact the event would have on business. Then consider what, if any, controls are in place fully to understand and determine your risk exposure and priority for mitigation /

planning to become more resilient from service interruption. A control is a proactive countermeasure that can be taken to reduce the frequency and/or impact of a risk before it materializes. The obvious risks/threats to plan for remains:

- Loss of primary work location (office or production is inaccessible; it does not matter why; building destroyed, crime scene, bed bug infestation, and yes even a meteor hit).
- IT hardware, network, or software failure/outages.
- Loss of business data
- Loss of telecommunications
- Power outages
- Loss of work force (for whatever reasons: pandemic, labour disruption, lottery winners)
- Vendors/suppliers and business partners
- Cyber-attack and data breach



Any effort to address risk mitigation with the implementation of the preventative and corrective actions to reduce or eliminate the exposure, probability, and/or severity, will need the support of senior management for the commitment of appropriate resources and funding.

While we cannot predict disaster, we can certainly plan for the obvious ones, so when they do occur, business has a better chance of survival. ■