

# 4 Ways to Prepare for World Events Disrupting the Supply Chain

Written by **Babette DuPriest**  
Wed, Sep 23, 2015



The Pope's visit to America will disrupt local supply chains. The Wall Street Journal detailed how the areas the Pope plans to visit should expect standstill traffic caused by massive crowds and increased security. Some shipping companies in those cities plan to suspend activities and warn customers to expect delays.

Numerous events may cause supply chain problems. Disasters, major weather events or government emergencies could shut down facilities and close travel routes. Unlike a fire or a tornado, however, a visit from a major global figure is an event businesses can prepare for weeks in advance.

When a company receives news of an activity or situation that may hinder normal operations, it has to create contingencies and plans. A well-prepared business limits customer dissatisfaction and lost resources. Here are four things supply chain managers can do to get ready for disruptive events:

## **1. Prioritize Visibility**

Before a major local event takes place, companies should ensure their communication procedures can adapt to new circumstances. Supply Chain 24/7

advised finding which supply chain information is most likely affected by developing incidents and which data collection processes are vital to continuing operations.

If managers know a visiting dignitary will halt traffic, they need to communicate with shipping fleets. If a storm heads towards a remote warehouse location, the business wants inventory management techniques that report every step of preparation. Mobile software that facilitates automatic data collection solutions provides insight into activities on a regular basis and it can help create information visibility during extraordinary events.

Closed roads don't just stop shipping trucks; they prevent employees from getting to work or visiting other company locations. Mobile data collection solutions prevent geographical obstacles from hindering communication.

## **2. Stock Up on Goods and Materials**

If certain future dates contain obstacles, a company may want to prepare merchandise and products before shipments from suppliers get slowed down or manufacturing processes suffer from lack of resources.

A business may not want a surplus of goods when it's facing a period where it will be unable to move products. When preparing for major weather events, however, the Wall Street Journal advised building up materials that may become unavailable after disaster strikes. This means receiving extra orders of manufacturing raw materials and producing emergency inventory in case facilities become damaged or handicapped by events.

Emergency inventory helps meet the increased demand that occasionally come after a major event. Sometimes when consumers are unable to obtain goods they rush to make purchases as soon as the obstacle is gone.

## **3. Contact Suppliers**

Business leaders should share visibility of manufacturing processes and warehouse management with invested stakeholders because collaboration is key to industry continuation during unusual events, according to Business Insurance. Providing vendors insight into event preparation plans ensures they are on the same page and can adjust shipments accordingly.

Companies could ask for increased shipments before a major event or they could ask for a delay. If an emergency or obstacle prevents a business from distributing goods to consumers, managers may try to pause vendor contracts until their supply chain gets back on track. It's important companies have an open line of communication with suppliers so the relationship can adjust based on outside factors.

If the business uses automated data collection procedures, supply chain snags are visible as soon as they occur. When the company has a strong relationship with a supplier, it should create contingencies for small disruptions and major events.

#### **4. Inform Customers**

The shipping companies affected by the Pope's visit alerted customers of delays. Instead of waiting for consumers to become frustrated, businesses should communicate distribution issues the moment the company becomes aware of the problem.

Outside events and internal problems should both be visible in a centralized software solution. Any issues that affect delivery schedules are important for customer service representatives or sales teams working with a specific clients. Complete automated data collection visibility helps employees share up-to-date information with consumers.

Informed customers may even call in when they learn of an event that could halt distribution. Employees armed with data coming straight from supply chain processes can communicate adjusted distribution schedules and calm upset consumers by intricately explaining every step the company takes to ensure the delivery reaches the client as quickly as possible.