

SURVIVING BEYOND COVID-19 – NGC's Business Continuity Plan continues



The National Gas Company (NGC) formally began preparing for the probable impact of COVID-19 on January 30, 2020. NGC mobilised a cross-functional team to action the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) in order to navigate and protect the business and essential services it provides to the country, so it was well posed to respond to the nationwide lockdown in March.

PROTECTING OUR GREATEST ASSET – PEOPLE

The core objective of any BCP is to protect and maintain business operations, profitability, and sustainability. NGC initiated work-from-home arrangements for all functions that could be executed remotely. Even as national restrictions were relaxed and the public service returned to office, The NGC Group continued the remote working arrangement for office-based staff. The Group has also implemented a regular schedule for employees to submit Health Declaration Forms, a procedure that also applies to vendors and contractors who come to work at NGC facilities. This measure has provided a framework for continually identifying and monitoring any potential risks that staff/contractors might pose to the business. The Health Declaration Forms also allow staff and contractors to update records with any changes to their COVID-19 status outside of the normal submission schedule.

NGC quickly recognised the need to have a case management system in place to address any COVID-19 cases that may arise. As part of this effort, the Company added to its in-house expertise by bringing a Group Occupational Health Nurse on board. It developed an agenda for treating with any potential COVID cases, thereby eliminating any ambiguity regarding the actions that should be taken to provide assurances and to eliminate risks. This health declaration process has resulted in NGC avoiding a COVID-19 outbreak that – far more than impacting business operations – could have severely affected the lives of employees and their families.



SERVICE DELIVERY REMAINS CONSISTENT

The Company's timely and agile response to this global crisis has allowed it, quite literally, to keep the lights on. Through concerted efforts to manage the Operations function of the business and the associated frontline staff, NGC has maintained its dedicated supply of natural gas to its power generation consumers. As much of the country continues to work from home and schools deliver classes virtually, a stable power supply is critical. NGC has not allowed the havoc wreaked by the virus to affect its downstream petrochemical and manufacturing consumers. While these sectors have faced challenges to their business during the pandemic, such as falling commodity prices and supply chain disruption, NGC remains committed to our consumers during this time of economic disturbance.

BCP MAINTAINS HIGH PRIORITY

The Group BCP Team has consistently held virtual meetings since March 2020, starting off at three times per week and eventually moving to once a week. These meetings allow for constant review of actions, including identifying emerging risks, determining and implementing any improvements, and undertaking any change management that may be required as a result. The work of the team is not limited to managing the challenges of COVID-19. During the 2020 hurricane season, the possible impact of adverse weather was added to the agenda. These meetings will continue into 2021.

Despite the success of the BCP, NGC is determined not to fall victim to complacency. The Company constantly revisits the plan to assure effectiveness and efficiency. A Business Impact Assessment review exercise is currently underway; it will reassess critical business processes and potential risks, as well as develop mitigative and recovery plans to address those risks. The findings and the analysis of these assessments will be applied to make any revisions or adjustments to the working BCP.

The BCP was tested internally via a virtual tabletop exercise, which identified gaps and examined the rigour of the plan. To demonstrate the robustness of its pandemic response plans, the NGC Group engaged in a voluntary internal assurance exercise to test the unit continuity plans against government recommendations. Results of this exercise were forwarded to the Ministry of Health and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to demonstrate compliance.

NGC WINS BCP AWARDS

The success of the management of NGC's BCP has not gone unnoticed. The American Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago (AMCHAM T&T) recognised the NGC Group's efforts to keep business going during the COVID-19 pandemic with three prestigious awards, announced during its annual Health, Safety, Security and

Environment (HSSE) conference. In the energy and manufacturing sector, the NGC Group was awarded the first BCP Planning and Surviving the Pandemic Award in the large category. National Energy, a subsidiary within the Group, received both the BCP Planning and Surviving the Pandemic Award and the Most Outstanding Occupational Safety and Health/Environmental Project for the small-medium category.

These accolades are indicative of industry-wide respect and admiration for the work of The NGC Group. They serve as commendation for the resilience demonstrated by the Company, and the tremendous effort invested in preparing and executing these award-winning business continuity initiatives.

IMAGINING THE 'NEW NORMAL'

There have recently been major strides in developing vaccines to act as a preventative barrier in the fight against COVID-19. The mass distribution of a successful vaccine has far-reaching implications, with many experts predicting that life may return to normal within six months to a year. But what will this 'normal' look like? Will it mean an end to remote-working and virtual meetings? These are some of the questions NGC is asking as it looks to a possible post-COVID-19 future. To simply return to 'the way things were' would mean ignoring the integration of information technology (IT) solutions, innovation, and value optimisation that were precipitated because of the pandemic.

The BCP actions have translated into results and successes, not only to the sustainability of The NGC Group's business, but also to that of the local energy sector and by extension, the national economy. The Company is currently defining a framework and action plan on the way forward, using the same proactive approach that worked so well at the beginning of the pandemic. The Group's Leadership and BCP teams are actively researching best practices for returning to work post-COVID. Based on the data and case studies available, NGC can then move to pre-emptively develop strategies and policies that will allow for a smooth transition.

AT THE FOREFRONT OF *Energy*