I remember as a child in Kindergarten climbing up the stairs to the slide in the playground when a 3.75 magnitude earthquake struck very close to the area of my school in Daly City, CA. Daly City was the closest town to the epicenter of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. The teachers in the playground were yelling “What was that, what was that?” I do not know why at that age I knew it was an earthquake, but thought the teachers were pretty dumb for not recognizing the cause of the ground moving beneath their feet. An earthquake of that size, depending on the type and soil conditions, is noticeable, especially if close to the epicenter, but not enough to start pulling out your cache of emergency provisions.

In the days prior to the earthquake, my mother would walk with me to and from school, but on that day she started a new job and I was to make the trek solo. Just two blocks from home after Kindergarten let out for the day, the strongest earthquake to hit the Bay Area since 1906 registered 5.3 on the Richter scale. I was all alone. I could see the street turn into rolling waves coming toward me. I tried to run but remember going nowhere. I could not stand and fell down. Above the noise generated by the earth movement, my grandmother at home could hear me screaming a city block away. I was so traumatized, I did not return to school for the remainder of the term. I can honestly say that I flunked Kindergarten.

My interest in natural phenomena is likely an outgrowth of my early years. Educating and protecting people from the harm they can cause and helping organizations become resilient in the face of disasters so the economies that support the workers remain intact seems like the right thing to do.

As the former librarian for a major business continuity professional organization, I was amazed that the great majority of the books I reviewed did not give the reader a road map to put together an effective holistic business continuity program. My interests in emergency management, emergency response, data systems, and business management gave me, I believe, a unique perspective that was missed by most authors. When I was asked to write a book solely dedicated to business continuity, I struggled with the dilemma of what I could do that was different from my first book and different from the hundreds of other books on the same subject. The competing standards have value to the profession, but there are few publications on the market that adequately explain what is required in a manner that does not cause a great deal of confusion. I hope this publication cuts through the confusion and leads the Business Continuity Manager to a path that produces an effective management system that will hold up to the standards. Bear in mind that my intent is NOT to say “Here is how you get certified under the standards.” If you are looking for certification, buy a copy of the standards. My intent is to show how to develop a program (management system) built under the standards that will help ensure resilience when a disaster happens.

The standards are intended to tell you “what” you need for an auditable program but not “how” to develop and manage the program. The purpose of this publication is to allow the reader to design and implement an effective Business Continuity Management System according to the ISO 22301 Societal security – Business continuity management systems standard, the ASIS SPC.1-2009 Organizational Resilience: Security, Preparedness, and Continuity Management Systems standard, and to the NFPA 1600:2010 and 2013 Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs. It draws on many of the related ISO standards that include The Risk Management Standard and the Internal Auditing Guidance. While I have included information on all three standards, I have emphasized the ISO standard. When I refer to a standard in the text without qualification (i.e., ASIS or NFPA), I am referring to ISO 22301.
For my own use, and in preparation for this publication, I have attended a number of presentations, classes, and webinars and have sifted through piles of literature on the implementation of the standards. I have seen and heard a lot of confusion and misinformation about what to do with the Plan, Do, Check, Act of the Deming Cycle. At almost every class or webinar I attend, I make it a point to ask how business continuity managers are to incorporate PDCA into their planning and into their plans. I ask this in part to gauge the presenter’s knowledge of the standards. The answers I got were all over the spectrum — “It is not needed at all” to “Forget everything before Clause 4” to “The plan must be organized along the lines of PDCA and of the clauses in the standard.” This reminds me of a number of years ago when the focus was on planning according to the Incident Command System (ICS). It seemed that none of the seminar presenters knew much about ICS or how to apply it to business continuity. Similarly, the presenters on the standards know a lot about business continuity (most seem to be sales people though) but fewer understand the standards or management systems in general.

Like James F. Broder and I did in Risk Analysis and the Security Survey, now in its fourth edition, where we listed specific procedures the reader could use when responding to a variety of emergency situations, I have included in this publication lists of Business Impact Analysis questions for the common functional areas of an organization. I have listed common business continuity strategies for these functions as well. Although we have placed them in the Appendix, I ask that they are reviewed in total to give the reader a better understanding of how to design Business Impact Questions and continuity strategies but mostly because important requirements under all of the standards are contained in the questions and strategies.

As I was finishing this manuscript, a 6.0 earthquake struck the lower Napa Valley of California at around 3:30 in the morning. This was the largest earthquake to hit the San Francisco Bay Area in the 25 years since the Loma Prieta Earthquake. Had the earthquake occurred later in the day, too many lives would have been lost. There were no immediate fatalities but a high degree of damage, including the loss of a major percentage of the inventory at some smaller wineries. The earthquake helped to remind me of the value of the standards, especially with their requirement for preparedness, mitigation, and response.

I did, however, go back to work the next day.