

## Tips & Tactics

### Incorporate Disaster Preparedness Into Staff Gift-Giving This Season

The holidays are upon us, and for managers and business leaders, it's the time for giving holiday bonuses or gifts to your staff. Instead of giving employees candy, a plant, or a bonus that goes into the household account to pay bills, you could follow the lead of Patricia Thorp, president of Thorp & Company in Coral Gables, Florida, and help your employees become better prepared for weather emergencies.

As you probably know, the state of Florida has experienced major hurricanes over the past several years.

This situation led Thorp to get serious about the public relations firm's disaster plan 2 years ago by turning a small cottage behind her home into an emergency center for her staff to use in the event of power outages. She bought a generator to power lights and computers in the cottage so that staff had access to the Internet and telephones. Her employees are able to use the cottage and the equipment for both personal and business communication needs.

After the experience of Hurricane Wilma, Thorp also found that a

strong reading lamp fitted with rechargeable batteries was something she truly appreciated during the extended power outage after the storm.

That's when she decided holiday gift-giving was a good opportunity to provide her employees with practical gifts like the lamp, a small refrigerator that can run on electricity or a car battery, and a combination television/radio that runs on batteries or electricity. "They [staff] were surprised at first since I usually give more touchy-feely gifts," she commented. "But we all feel a little safer—and a little more prepared—now."

Gifts similar to these can be found through high-end retailers such as Sharper Image and Amazon. Thorp said that she also expects that many of them could be found at camping supply stores.