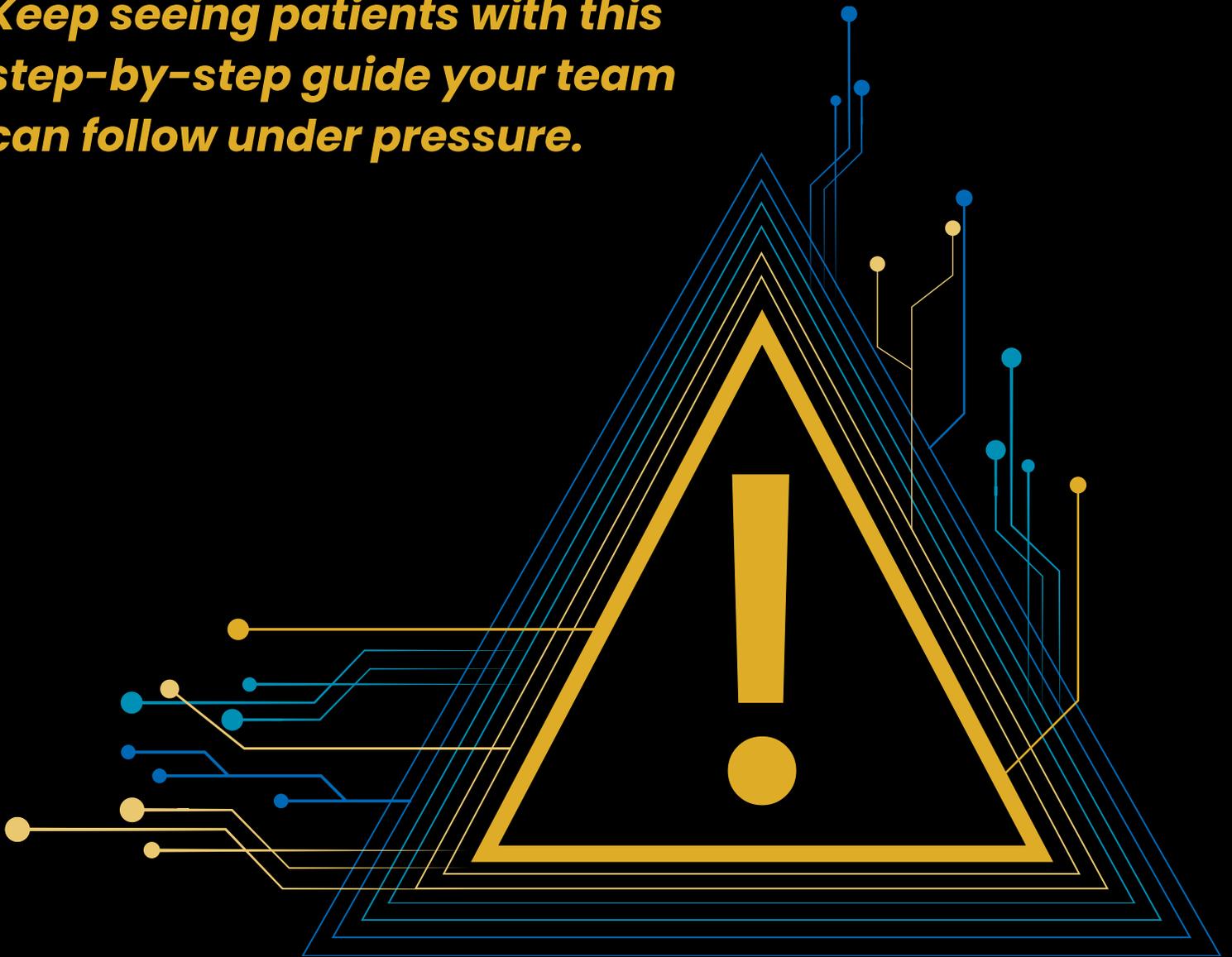# Dental Practice Tech Outage Guide

Keep seeing patients with this step-by-step guide your team can follow under pressure.

Pro Tip: *Keep one copy in a Tech Outage Kit binder and one in a secure shared location.*

Confirm. Contain. Activate.

First 5 Minutes: Confirm & Contain

- ☐ Confirm the scope: Is it internet, phones, practice management, imaging, server, or "everything"?
- ☐ Check basics: power, modem/router lights, firewall status, Wi-Fi vs. hardwired, any recent changes.
- ☐ Declare "Downtime Mode": Office lead announces downtime and starts the timer.
- ☐ Stop unsafe workarounds: No personal email/text of PHI. No photos of screens. No "guessing" passwords.
- ☐ Record start time + symptoms: What went down, when, and what's affected.

Downtime Log (quick fill):

- Outage start time: _____
- Systems affected: _____
- Who declared downtime: _____

Activate Your Downtime Team (Roles)

- ☐ Downtime Leader (usually PM/office lead): Owns the checklist + decisions
- ☐ IT Point of Contact: Calls IT partner, coordinates troubleshooting
- ☐ Patient Communication Lead: Updates waiting room + text/calls
- ☐ Clinical Documentation Lead: Distributes paper forms, sets chart-handling rules
- ☐ Payments Lead: Switches to approved payment continuity method
- ☐ Runner/Float: Copies forms, tracks packets, keeps traffic moving

Write names for today:

- Downtime Leader: _____
- IT POC: _____
- Patient Comms: _____
- Clinical Docs: _____
- Payments: _____
- Runner/Float: _____

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Technology Status.

Call Your IT Partner (What to Provide So They Can Move Fast)

☐ Outage start time and what changed recently (updates, new device, ISP work, natural disaster).

☐ What works / doens't work (front desk PCs? Ops? Imaging? Wi-Fi? Hardwired?

☐ Any error messages (screenshot if allowed and contains no PHI).

☐ Impact summary: number of users affected, locations impacted.

Key Contacts (fill in):

- IT support line: _____
- ISP support: _____
- Merchant services: _____
- Practice management vendor: _____
- Imaging vendor: _____

Imaging & Labs (If Digital Imaging is Down)

☐ Confirm what's affected: sensors, CBCT, imaging software, viewing stations, etc.

☐ Determine clinical work that can proceed without imaging vs. must reschedule.

☐ If imaging is needed for safety/quality, pause that procedure until systems return or alternative is avaiable.

☐ Track any images captured locally to reconcile later (device/station + patient + time).

Phones & Internet: Continuity Options

☐ If VoIP is down: switch to cell backup, call forwarding, or published alternate number.

☐ If internet is down: confirm whether a secondary ISP or hotspot failover is available.

☐ Post a short message on voicemail/IVR (if available) and update staff on what patients should be told. (See Patient Communications for more details)

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This document is designed to provide general information/recommendation and should not be taken as legal advice or replace any current HIPAA-aligned policies that your practice has in place.

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Communication.
Documentation.

Patient Communication (script-ready):

☐ "We're experiencing a temporary systems issue. Our clinical team is still here, and we'll take care of you. We may be slightly delayed while we use our downtime process. Thank you for your patience."

Patient Flow: Keep the Schedule Moving (Safely)

☐ Pull today's schedule from your printed/secure backup copy.

☐ Identify "must-keep" appointments (surgery, sedation, urgent pain) vs. reschedule.

☐ Set a chairside decision rule: If you can't verify critical medical info safely, pause/triage.

☐ Use a limited schedule view (avoid treatment details visible to the public).

☐ Start a patient status tracker (checked-in / seated / completed / needs follow-up call).

HIPAA-Safe Offline Documentation (Minimum Necessary)

☐ Use downtime encounter forms (not blank printer paper).

☐ Print/prepare only the minimum necessary PHI for care today.

☐ Keep paper packets behind the front desk or in a locked drawer/cabinet.

☐ Use a sign-out sheet for any paper chart/packet leaving the desk.

☐ Clearly label forms: patient name/ID, date, provider, "DOWNTIME".

☐ Store completed forms in a designated secure bin/folder (not on counters).

☐ Document downtime workarounds: what was done offline and what needs re-entry later.

Paper sign-out tracker (example):

Patient:_____ Packet #/Type: _____ Taken by: _____

Time Out: _____ Time Returned: _____

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Payment Continuity.
Recovery Status.
Post-Incident.

Payment Continuity (PCI-Safe)

☐ Use processor-approved downtime method only (e.g., cellular terminal, offline mode if enabled).

☐ Do not write down full card numbers unless your merchant provider explicitly authorizes a compliant process.

☐ Secure any authorized slips/record physically (access-controlled) until processed.

☐ Track "payments pending" so nothing gets missed when systems return.

Payments pending log (example):

Patient:_____ Amount:_____ Method:_____

Captured By:_____ Notes:_____

Recovery: When Systems Come Back

☐ Confirm stability before resuming normal workflow.

☐ Re-enter downtime notes into PM system (assigned owner & deadline).

☐ Reconcile: schedule changes, treatment notes, prescriptions, payments, consents.

☐ Update/attach any imaging captured during downtime (if applicable).

☐ Shred/dispose of paper per policy once reconciled (or file if required by retention policy).

☐ Close the downtime log with end time and summary.

Downtime end time: _____ Total downtime: _____

Post-Incident "Make It Better" (Same Day or Within 72 Hours)

☐ Hold a 15-minute debrief: what worked, what broke, what slowed patient flow.

☐ Update the tech outage kit (forms, batteries, contact lists, instructions).

☐ Confirm backups/restores are healthy.

☐ Schedule a downtime drill (quarterly is ideal for most practices).

☐ Document lessons learned & owner for follow-up.

Your Tech Outage Kit

No one can predict when the worst will hit.
Being prepared is your best bet for a healthy bottom line.
Keep the following in one place in case you encounter an outage:

- ☐ Printed quick-contact list (IT/ISP/merchant/vendors)
- ☐ Printed limited schedule view template & daily schedule print habit
- ☐ Paper encounter forms & consent templates
- ☐ Sign-out sheet & secure folders/binder
- ☐ "Downtime Mode" instructions (such as this guide or a policy tailored to your practice)
- ☐ Pens, clipboards, labels, stapler
- ☐ Locked shared bin access instructions
- ☐ Backup phone/headset plan, charger bank

Is your practice vulnerable to tech outages?
Problems often start under the surface.
Pact-One can **pinpoint your risk areas** and give you a clear
action plan **to prevent future downtime**.

Book an IT Outage Risk Check today!

866-722-8663 | info@pact-one.com | www.Pact-One.com

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