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Loss Control Services Publication

Checklist

Winter Weather Preparation

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Weather Service urge everyone to stay informed of local forecasts and warnings. Using these tips and information may help you better understand and prepare for winter weather.

Step 1: Familiarize yourself with key weather terminology

Winter Weather Advisory: Issued when winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences that may be hazardous. If caution is exercised, advisory situations should not become life-threatening.

Winter Storm Watch: Issued when severe winter conditions – such as heavy snow and/or ice – may affect your area, but the specific occurrence, location and timing are uncertain. Providing 12- to 36-hours of notice of the possibility of severe winter weather, a winter storm watch is intended to provide enough lead time so those who need to set plans in motion can do so.

Winter Storm Warning: Issued when hazardous winter weather in the form of heavy snow, heavy freezing rain or heavy sleet is imminent or occurring, specifically when any one of these conditions exists or is expected:

- Four or more inches of snow or sleet in 12 hours
- Six or more inches in 24 hours
- One-quarter inch or more of ice accumulation

Blizzard Warning: Issued if snow and strong winds will combine to produce a blinding snow, deep drifts and life-threatening wind-chill.

Step 2: Consider tips to prepare for and recover from winter weather

Before Winter Weather Arrives:

- Determine your greatest risk potential: loss of electricity and heat, frozen pipes and/or loss of access due to snow and ice.
- Maintain automatic sprinkler protection in idle buildings and promptly handle sprinkler system impairments and deficiencies.
- Monitor building temperature. Keep temperatures above 55°F, and pay close attention to hard-to-heat areas containing water supply and fire sprinkler piping.
- Ensure that you have an emergency communication plan in place prior to severe weather.
- Clean and inspect HVAC, boilers and other heating equipment for proper operation.
- Arrange for snow removal from driveways, sidewalks, doorways and roofs.
- Identify who – business owner (tenant) or landlord – is responsible for snow and ice removal.
- Have all employees, vendors and clients contact information on hand in case of emergency.
- Mark hydrants near your business for ease in locating and clearing after a winter storm.
- Properly test your building's transfer switch and emergency generator. Consult a qualified electrician if appropriate.
- Test and maintain all cold-weather equipment, including snow blowers.
- Assess the need for portable heaters or other emergency equipment.
- Repair walls and roofs to prevent drafts and water leaks.
- Check roof drains for debris and clean debris from gutters and downspouts.
- Drain all idle mechanical equipment, including compressors and pumps.
- Make sure all sprinkler systems have been inspected and maintained in accordance with NFPA 13.
- Maintain adequate supplies of snow-melt chemicals and sand.
- Use technology: weather applications on smartphones can alert you and your staff of severe weather events.

During The Winter:

- Monitor and maintain building temperatures above 55°F. Consider installing temperature sensor alarms.
- Continuously circulate air throughout your building to prevent temperature drops near outside walls, concealed spaces and plenum space above drop/false ceilings.
- Keep driveways, walkways and doorways clear of snow and ice.
- Complete snow removal around and in front of sprinkler valves to allow for proper fire department access.

After A Winter Storm:

- Check buildings for damage, including downed electrical lines and trees, accumulated snow or ice and blocked hydrants.
- Clear snow away to prevent localized flooding and icing situations in parking lots and service areas.
- Eliminate snow piles and drifts that impede driver visibility.
- Inspect all HVAC and heating systems, including plumbing, for potential damage.
- Assess your situation. Meet with your emergency management team and review how your plan functioned and how to improve it for future weather events.

For additional information, visit:

- cinfin.com, Businesses, Loss Control Services, Business Tips
- NOAA's Winter Weather Awareness Web page at http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/winter/resources/Winter_Storms2008.pdf

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