

Be Prepared With a Disaster Plan You Can Implement



By Mike Benmoschè

I think everyone would agree that the Florida hurricanes and tornados this year were devastating. Although the Northeast is not often subject to the same kinds of coastal exposures, we are no strangers to storms. Many of the preventive measures used in the coastal areas are just as applicable in non-coastal territories.

The following article is intended to outline some general information on steps that can help minimize damage and maybe even protect property and lives from loss due to catastrophic storms. This is not designed to represent all possible hazards and/or comply with any regulatory laws, but hopefully will provide some basic information with which to tailor make your own disaster plan.

The first thing all operators should do is to develop an emergency plan. Some of the items you may want to include the following:

- Assign a team to be responsible for coordination in the event of a loss. They are responsible for clean up, salvage and restoration.
- Work with your utility contractors to establish an emergency repair program before a disaster happens.
- Review your plan once a year to include any updates that may become necessary.
- Establish guidelines for protecting your property using a pre-storm precaution plan checklist when warnings of an impending storm are issued.

This checklist should include the following steps under each of the following categories.

Buildings

- ✓ Close unnecessary openings
- ✓ Secure any loose items that are part of the structure
- ✓ Inspect the roof for loose coverings
- ✓ Make sure all roof drains are clean
- ✓ Use bracing for additional support
- ✓ Make sure there is no debris around the building

Business personal property

- ✓ Secure any susceptible materials from openings
- ✓ Secure or remove any flammables
- ✓ Cover and protect product and computers with waterproof covers

Utilities

- ✓ Shut off all gas supplies
- ✓ Shut off all electrical equipment
- ✓ Fill emergency generator or other backup power source fuel tanks

Equipment

- ✓ Apply a coating of rust preventative compound to all equipment

After the storm has passed there are a few more post-storm precautions that you may consider:

- Implement your emergency action plan via your storm team
- Check all fire protection devices to be sure they are operational
- Check for any loose or down wiring
- Look for any leaks from any pipe lines
- Identify any weaknesses that might compromise the structural integrity of the building
- Separate damaged from undamaged materials
- Cover any exposed areas
- Be sure the property is protected from access by anyone not authorized to be on the site

Having a precautionary emergency plan can be a real lifesaver if and when disaster strikes. It always happens to the other guy, but someone has to be the "other guy." If it is you, you'll be glad you did some pre-planning. ■

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****This article was adapted from excerpts from an emergency checklist offered by the Philadelphia Insurance Company.**

Carwashers Go to Albany



Tom Hoffman Jr., Bob Klein and Dennis O'Shaughnessy Sr. met with Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno (third from left) in Albany recently to discuss the in-bay automatic language clarification issue the association is pursuing. Bruno, a long-time friend of the association, was extremely receptive to a language clarification. NYSCWA lobbyist Denise Murphy McGraw initiated the meeting on behalf of the association. ■