

Preparing for Winter Storms

Winter, and the freezing temperatures, snow, and ice that it brings, is a significant hazard for CIRMA members. Add in power outages, slips and falls on ice, and heavy snow and your municipality's or schools losses can, well, snowball.

Guide for Discussion

Before winter arrives

- Before the first freeze, turn off and drain all outside water faucets and sprinkler systems.
- Make sure equipment, valuable items, or items that could be damaged are located where they will stay dry—off the floor and away from sources of water.
- Test the water shut-off valve; now is a good time to replace leaky or corroded valves.
- Fully insulate all water pipes, even PVC pipes, which can crack and break when frozen.
- Pay close attention to insulating sprinkler or water lines in
 - unheated attics or dead air spaces,
 - near outside walls and windows,
 - pipes on the north side of buildings,
 - areas exposed to strong winds,
 - concealed ceilings and wall spaces, penthouses, and
 - cooler areas such as entryways and bathrooms.
- Winterize unheated, unoccupied, or vacant buildings. Even small leaks can cause extensive damage if left undiscovered for a long period of time.
- Test emergency generating equipment and battery back-ups.
- If you have generators, make sure they are properly rated for the job and are “good to go.” Perform a startup test now. Ideally generators should be tested under actual load conditions quarterly. Make sure that you have fuel on hand; do not use gasoline or diesel fuel that is more than a year old. (Please see Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection and Insurance's guidelines for *Preparing for an Electrical Power Outage* at HSB.com for more information about testing and operating back-up generators.)

Prepare and protect staff

- Schedule regular building checks, or “Freeze Watches,” during storms and cold weather.
- Schedule snow and ice removal of roadways and sidewalks. Ensure snowplow operators have attended safety training.
- Provide staff a list of emergency telephone numbers. Include, for example, snow removal contact, HVAC repair, utility company, the weather bureau, and the risk manager.
- Have cold weather gear on hand. Hats, gloves, emergency blankets, flashlights and batteries will all be useful during a cold weather emergency. Make sure that the staff knows where they are stored.

During a winter power outage

- If your building does not have its own generators, make arrangements to obtain non-electrical heating units during emergencies.
- Power surges and sags can damage equipment. Unplug them during severe weather or install surge protectors.
- Turn on the faucets to let the water trickle through to help prevent the pipes from freezing.
- Temporary or portable heating devices should only be used for facilities personnel for emergency purposes.

Additional Discussion Notes: Attend CIRMA's Snowplow Safety Workshop for more training.

Remember

Attendees

Questions? Ask your Supervisor or CIRMA Risk Management Consultant.