



ARE YOU HURRICANE READY?

As we enter another hurricane season it is important that we take a step back and make sure that our facility, systems, staff and community are prepared for the potential disaster of a hurricane. Hurricanes can affect any part of our state in a variety of ways, we need to be prepared for any scenario that comes our way. Properly preparing for a hurricane can also help us prepare for a number of other disasters as well. The following guide should be a good starting block for getting your Agency or University's facilities ready for disaster.

Preparation – Long Term

The following items should be done at the beginning of the season to be prepared once a hurricane is forecasts to impact your location.

- Verify that roof-mounted signs and equipment, guy wires and supports are properly anchored and in good repair.
- Repair or replace any weak or damaged door hinges and latches.
- Verify auxiliary lighting is in working order.
- Establish a system to protect all windows and openings on your buildings. Create a plan and inform staff of their responsibilities well in advance. Installation of these protections will greatly reduce the potential for property damage.
- Compile an emergency contact list with 24 hour telephone contact numbers for essential employees. This list should include contacts outside of your Agency or University that will need to be notified; this could include local police/sheriff, fire department, Emergency Management and Department of Insurance Risk Management.
- Establish an emergency response team and assemble the necessary supplies and equipment at a central, secure location. Each year this equipment should be inspected and verify supplies are in good repair. Again, make sure staff are informed of their responsibilities and know what to do when called to action. Those on the team should be reviewed yearly as well to insure new staff are incorporated and staff that are no longer with the agency are replaced if necessary.

Examples of supplies and equipment may include:

- Portable Pumps and hoses
 - Mops and squeegees
 - Emergency lighting
 - Tarpaulins/plastic sheeting
 - Lumber and nails
 - Power and manual tools
 - Sandbags
 - Shovels and axes
 - Building diagrams/schematics
 - Ropes/fasteners
 - Radio communication equipment
- Contact several local restoration and repair companies that can come in and evaluate your facilities and be “on call” following a disaster. Having these relationships established ahead of time will speed the recovery process and allow you to get back to normal operations much quicker. This will also give these companies familiarity with your facilities and aid in the recovery process.

- Identify staff who will be responsible for damage assessment and salvage following the storm.
- Have insurance information and contact numbers on hand and easily accessible.

Preparation – Short Term

If a hurricane or the potential for hurricane type weather is forecast for your area and as it approaches the following actions will need be undertaken to provide an initial layer of protection for your facilities.

- Shutter or board up windows to help protect them from flying debris.
- Clean out floor drains, roof drains/gutters and catch basins. Check drainage pumps.
- Anchor structures, trailers and yard storage so they will less likely be moved by high winds. Move yard storage inside where practical.
- Tie down or bring indoors any objects which may be blown around by hurricane winds.
- Anchor and fill above-ground tanks to capacity with product or water to minimize wind damage.
- Move drums and portable containers of flammable liquids to a secure properly protected area. Do not move these materials inside your facility unless you have determined that fire protection is adequate to allow inside storage of flammable liquids.
- Secure outdoor cranes in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions.
- Fill emergency generator and fire pump fuel tanks.
- Inspect all fire protection equipment to be sure it is in service.
- Move important records to a secure area that is protected from the elements. Duplicate critical records and move them offsite to a location that is not susceptible to the hurricane.
- Shut off all flammable liquid, combustible liquid and gas lines at their source to prevent an accidental release caused by broken piping.
- Shut off electrical power at the main building disconnect before the hurricane strikes.
- Evacuate all employees and, if safe for an emergency response team to remain in the building, ensure that the team has the following: °
 - Nonperishable food
 - Suitable communication devices
 - Stored drinking water
 - Flashlights/batteries
 - First-aid supplies
 - Vehicles with full fuel tanks
 - Dry clothing
 - Boots/gloves/hard hats

During the Storm

Before the storm hits arrangements should be made with local law enforcement or other personnel to have the emergency response team evacuated in the case this becomes necessary, the team’s plans should be communicated as well. If the emergency response team can remain on site, a safe area of substantial construction should be available for the team members. The emergency response team should monitor the facility as long as it remains safe to do so during the storm, they should be looking for the following:

- Watch for structural damage and if safe to do so make repairs or secure the location to prevent further damage.
 - Watch for causes of fire and take corrective action if needed or safe to do so.
 - Check sprinkler water pressures frequently and watch for loss of pressure.
 - Watch for flooding from rain or tidal surge and place sandbags as may be necessary.
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After the Hurricane

Once the storm has passed and it is safe to get out and about the damage assessment team and salvage team should be assembled and being to assess damage, identify job priority and take any necessary steps to secure and protect equipment and property. A uniform damage assessment document should be used and collected by the team lead. Once all the damage assessments have been collected they should be prioritized. Teams should include photographs or video of the damaged property or contents. The following is a rough guide for establishing priority action plans:

- Look for safety hazards such as downed power lines, exposed electrical wires, leaking gas, etc.
- Appraise buildings for structural damage or undermining of building foundations.
- Assess impaired fire protection equipment and alarms.
- Assess critical equipment and valuable stock that is required to restore operations.
- Complete temporary repairs and minimize hazards to ensure personnel can safely access the building.

Other precautions or items that should be addressed by these teams:

- Provide portable multi-purpose fire extinguishers.
- Require strict precautionary measures for any cutting/welding that will occur in or around the buildings.
- Eliminate any unnecessary ignition sources and include the enforcement of “No Smoking” regulations.
- Establish a procedure for removing debris brought by the storm and as a result of any reconstruction efforts.
- Any holes or other penetrations in the building walls should be temporarily repaired.
- Assess and prioritize building contents that have been damaged and can be salvaged.

Precautions for specific hazard areas:

Fire protection equipment

- Assess and service fire pumps that were submerged. The pumps should be tested and placed back in service.
- Assess the integrity of fire protection alarm circuits. Fully test all alarms. Repair as needed.
- Assess the integrity of security alarm circuits. Fully test all alarms. Repair as needed.
- Physically test any sprinkler control valves that were submerged to verify they are operational. Conduct main drain tests for the sprinkler system(s).
- Notify the local fire department of any extended impairments that will be required for the above systems. It may be necessary to arrange for fire and security watch services for your building whenever protection is out of service.

Electrical restoration should be completed

- Do not energize electrical circuits in the buildings until an electrician has checked all systems.
 - Care should be exercised around damaged power cables.
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- The electrician should notify the squad leader and utility company of all necessary repairs.
- Electric motors, switch gear and cables should be thoroughly inspected, cleaned and dried as needed before energizing. Even if it has not been immersed, electrical equipment can absorb sufficient moisture to reduce its insulation resistance to a dangerously low level. While electrical leakage may be too small to blow fuses or trip the circuit breakers, it may be sufficient to cause overheating and fires. A specialized restoration company may be needed to address restoration of wet electrical equipment.
- Carefully examine all metal-clad cable, lighting sockets, receptacles, snap switches or any devices with paper or fiber insulation.

Mechanical equipment and systems:

- Check all flammable liquid and gas piping systems and associated tanks for leaks or damage.
- Steam lines and any refractory-containing equipment should be examined for wet insulation. In some cases, if insulation is contaminated, it must be stripped and restored rather than dried in place.
- Test the water supply for boilers, process feed and cooling water, and test underground storage tank contents for contamination before use.
- Mechanical equipment should be cleaned and dried with casings opened for inspection. Shafting should be checked for alignment and lubricating systems flushed.

Security service:

- Perform a continual fire watch until normal operations are resumed.
- Verify that personnel understand how to contact outside emergency response units.
- Provide suitable communication equipment so personnel can immediately contact emergency response units.

Familiarize personnel with any unsafe or hazardous conditions and update them with the progress of salvage operations.

Your head of facility maintenance and your insurance coordinator should be in regular contact both before and after the storm. It will be important for you to notify the State Property Fire Insurance Fund claims staff in order to get the recovery process underway. We can assist with obtaining contact information for restoration companies in your area and guide you through the claims process. Your Agency leadership should be aware of the process as well. The effort that you put in to preparation will lead to better outcomes and a safer, more resilient workplace.

For any questions related to storm readiness or any other risk management topic the Risk Management Division at the Department of Insurance will be happy to assist you.
