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Risk Management Bulletin

Preparing for Winter Storms

Severe winter weather can occur in many forms. Rain, sleet, ice, snow, hail, blizzards, or any combination of these is possible. Often, a change of only a few degrees in temperature can make the difference between a rainy winter day and a severe winter storm. Severe winter storms can be local or cover large areas of the state; they may vary with intensity, depending on location. Severe winter storms and their residual effects can hamper local or distant services critical to your operations. Storms can also occur back to back in quick succession, providing little time to recover from one storm before the next one strikes. Your entity can be better prepared for winter storms by taking the following actions:

Operations:

- Establish contingency plans for staffing, fuel, equipment, fire protection, strategic shutdown, continued business operations, etc.
- Establish a means for communicating with employees, contractors, emergency agencies, etc.
- Designate an individual to monitor the weather forecast
- Alert maintenance staff when cold or snowy weather is expected.

Buildings & Facilities:

- Inspect buildings, equipment, etc...; be sure to include idle facilities and equipment.
- Schedule annual maintenance and repair of building and heating systems well before winter.
- Maintain buildings at 40°F (4°C) or above.
- Designate an individual to monitor indoor building temperatures every few hours. Install thermometers, especially in hard-to-heat areas.
- Insulate piping, and consider installing heat tracing lines on critical piping. Be sure piping systems in concealed spaces are kept warm.
- Check that buildings have adequate insulation and that windows, doors, skylights, louvers, ducts, dampers and vents are properly closed or sealed.
- Inspect, test and repair heating equipment, boilers combustion controls, and safety devices. Remember to test back-up equipment.
- Check valves, drains, and vents to be sure that moving parts are in working order and that openings are unobstructed.
- Install snow fences and marker poles at hydrants and at fire protection control valves.
- Block walking areas under roof overhangs to prevent falling snow from creating a hazard.

Pay Special Attention To Fire Protection Systems and Equipment

- Check all areas of the building to be certain that sufficient heat (40° or above) is maintained to prevent sprinkler systems from freezing.
- Do not use electrical heat tape on dry pipe valves as a substitute for permanent heating.
- Be sure that fire extinguishers are protected from cold or are the type that are not vulnerable to cold (e.g., antifreeze or ABC types) .
- Check anti-freeze solution strength of sprinkler system annually.

Prepare Equipment Needed to Respond To Winter Conditions

- Inspect, repair and/or maintain snow removal equipment and machinery.
- List suppliers (with phone numbers) for portable boilers, heating units, and/or electric generators.
- Top off fuel in emergency generators; test run generators.
- Check fuel supplies and fueling equipment
- Prepare or acquire other supplies, such as:
 - Tarps
 - Space heaters
 - Steam hoses (for thawing frozen lines)
 - Antifreeze
 - Warm clothing (especially hand, head and foot protection)
 - Food, water
 - Cots, blankets

Plan For Snow Removal

- Acquire, prepare, inspect, repair and maintain snow removal equipment:
 - Shovels
 - Ice scrapers
 - Wheelbarrows
 - Sand/salt spreaders
 - Snowblowers
 - Ice chippers
 - Plows
- Obtain sufficient fuel supplies
- Be sure the snow removal plan includes roofs, skylights, canopies, and overhangs.
- Screen/Select staff carefully for heavy physical activity like shoveling.
- Have a place where workers can get warmed up and fed and where they can rest.

Disclaimer:

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