PACE

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QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

SEVERE WEATHER

It seems weather events are becoming both more common and more extreme every year, wreaking damage to our buildings and properties. This damage can disrupt daily operations for weeks or months and result in expensive claims for PACE members. Creating and implementing well-designed inclement weather plans can help prevent or reduce the severity of this damage and the ensuing costs.

The first step in prevention is planning. It is important to monitor approaching weather events to provide time to implement appropriate measures to protect building systems and infrastructure. Interactive NWS Alert is one service through the National Weather Service that provides weather conditions and warns of potential threats. Emergency managers can register at the following link and receive notifications of impending weather threats: https://inws.ncep.noaa.gov/.

The next step is to ensure response plans for potential weather emergencies are in place and necessary supplies are on hand. These plans will vary depending on location and the potential weather threats for that area.

For example, to prevent damage from extreme low temperatures, know which pipes are vulnerable and have plans to protect them. This could include running heat overnight, using heat tape, popping ceiling tiles, closing vents and letting faucets drip. If possible, have a plan in place to drain lines in the event of an extended power outage. Have de-icer on hand and a plan for snow and ice removal for entrances and walkways. For areas prone to heavy snowfall, develop a plan for removing snow from roofs.

To prepare for wind events, trees should be evaluated and trimmed or removed over the summer to prevent damage from winter windstorms. Supplies such as plywood and tarps to cover windows and roofs should be stockpiled to enable quick response to limit water intrusion should damage occur.

Once these plans have been created, a process needs to be developed and duties assigned to those responsible. Staff should be dedicated to monitor weather on a continuous basis, with the authority to initiate preventative measures if appropriate. Staff should be assigned to check buildings during extended closures. A response team must be ready should damage to the building occur. A relationship with an established disaster restoration contractor should be considered.

If a site should suffer major damage from a storm, it is important to learn from the experience by asking the following questions: What went well with the plan and response? What could we have done better? What changes should be made to our plan to prevent or reduce damage should a similar event occur in the future?

Extreme weather events are here to stay and are beyond our control. But by maintaining a watchful eye, having well-considered preventive measures in place and initiating a coordinated response, we can prevent or limit their destructive effects.