

# Winter Weather Hazard Checklist

## *Winter weather precautions: Property and fire sprinkler considerations*

**WINTER WEATHER** precautions should be taken in the event of forecasted cold weather or winter storms. Preparing in advance of the winter season is key to helping mitigate winter weather impacts on property and fire sprinkler protection systems. Precautions typically focus on freeze protection, snow and ice removal, and monitoring for loss of building heat, water damage and snow accumulation.

### Pre-season planning (late summer/early fall)

- Update and review your emergency response plan for winter weather including emergency contact information and personnel.
- Establish/review contracts with vendors and service providers.
- Establish procedures for monitoring weather forecasting (Who, How, When).
- Conduct an exterior building inspection. Identify and repair any damaged areas.
- Identify concealed spaces (drop ceilings, dock areas, attic areas) and monitor temperature to verify if these spaces have sufficient heat (>40 degrees F).
- Confirm or schedule recent maintenance and inspection of equipment such as boilers and furnaces.
- Ensure regular testing and inspection of the fire sprinkler systems including:
  - Alarm testing (waterflow, low air, low temperature (dry pipe)) and verify that alarms are monitored by a central station.
  - For wet pipe systems, ensure the fire sprinkler systems are adequately protected from freezing temperatures (building heat >40 degrees F or insulation).
  - For dry pipe systems, ensure drum drips are drained and that the air compressor is operating and connected to emergency power.
  - Test antifreeze concentrations present.
  - Review fire sprinkler system impairment procedures.

- Conduct semi-annual roof inspection and ensure drains and gutters are clear of debris and vegetation.
- Verify the structural design load of your roof with respect to snow loading.
- Protect outdoor equipment or yard storage.
- Trim vegetation back away from power lines and winterize fire sprinklers exposed to the elements.
- Update and review your emergency response plan including emergency contact information and personnel.
- Verify adequate supply of ice melt, snow shovels, snowblowers and extra floor mats are on-site.
- Confirm adequate fuel supply levels for emergency generators and other critical equipment.
- Confirm recommended levels of insulation are present in attics and exterior walls, reinsulate if necessary.
- Review procedures for backups to the servers.
- Update and review procedures for reporting property claims.

## During a winter storm

- Initiate winter weather emergency response plan.
- Monitor weather for anticipated snow and ice accumulation along with expected temperatures.
- Ensure access to fire hydrants, fire pump, fire risers, and fire department connections are maintained.
- If safe to do so, monitor the building regularly for water leaks, temperature drops (particularly in concealed spaces), roof conditions and snow loading.
- If there is a power outage, monitor indoor building temperatures. If temperatures begin dropping below 40 degrees Fahrenheit and approach freezing temperatures, emergency procedures for turning off water to these systems may be necessary.
- If using space heaters, ensure devices are UL-listed and/or FM-approved and maintain manufacture recommended clear space from combustibles around heaters.
- Monitor snow depths and evaluate if snow removal from the roof is needed at approximately 50% of the safe maximum depth. Snow drifts should be cleared first.
- Clear snow and ice from drains and catch basins.
- Follow company policy for ensuring employee safety.

## After a storm event

- Follow procedures for restoring building heat (if applicable).
- Return the fire sprinkler systems/fire pumps to automatic operation. Ensure the systems are not impaired.
  - Post fire watch in areas where protection is impaired.
  - Inform fire department and insurance carriers of any impairments.
- Update management on condition of building and equipment. Inspect concealed spaces such as attics and crawl spaces for water leakage.
- Establish repair priorities focusing on building envelope and fire protection.
- Implement pre-established restoration plan. Contact designated continuity, repair and cleaning vendors.
- Ensure proper hot work protocols for repair work.
- Check electrical equipment before connecting or restarting.
- Document damages and repairs. Coordinate claims activity with Lockton's Claims Team.
  - Keep receipts and invoices for recovery.
  - Often a separate accounting code for recovery costs works best.
- Debrief winter weather precautions event response. Review with personnel what worked and what didn't. Revise the plan if needed. Restock emergency supplies. Prioritize improvements.