

# What to do before a winter weather event

## Last-Minute Actions

When severe winter weather is forecast, complete these last-minute actions, if time allows, to keep employees safe and your facility prepared.

### STAY INFORMED & ACTIVATE PLAN

#### MONITOR THE WEATHER & ACTIVATE YOUR PLAN

- Find a reliable source for severe winter weather information. Follow the National Weather Service (NWS) Weather Prediction Center ([WPC](#)) on [Facebook](#) or [X](#), and your [local NWS office](#). Tune in to local news often when winter weather is forecast.
- Enable wireless emergency alerts on your cell phone. What to listen for:
  - Winter Storm, Winter Weather, Blizzard, Wind Chill
  - A WATCH means be prepared.
  - A WARNING means take action.
- Activate your winter plan. Communicate the emergency preparedness plan to all employees in advance of severe weather.

### PREPARE YOUR FACILITY

#### PREVENT PIPES FROM FREEZING

- Set the building's internal thermostat to a minimum of 55°F (12.8°C).
- For small commercial properties
  - Open cabinet doors where piping is present, especially when pipes are adjacent to an exterior wall.
  - Let all faucets drip during extreme cold weather.

#### TURN ON SELF-REGULATING ROOF HEATING CABLES

- If you have an ice dam prevention system, turn it on before the snow begins to fall.

#### CONFIRM SERVICES WITH PRE-SCHEDULED CONTRACTORS

- Confirm availability of the snow removal service.
- Confirm delivery of rented portable generator.
- Arrange for alternate security if the alarm system loses power while the building cannot be occupied.

#### ENSURE YOU HAVE PLENTY OF SUPPLIES, SUCH AS:

- Fuel for generators or snowblowers.
- Snow removal equipment.
- De-icing products for walkways and parking lots.
- Blankets, in case employees get stranded.

### DURING THE WINTER EVENT

#### CONTINUE TO MONITOR CONDITIONS AND STAY CONNECTED

- Update status of operations.
  - Employees: Emergency hotlines/email/intranet
  - Customers: Website/social media/phone calls
- Designate times for key staff members to dial into or join online meetings for situation updates.

# What to do after a winter weather event



## Recover Quickly

Recovering from a winter storm can vary, from snow removal to repairing damage to your building, or replacing inventory. Follow these steps to recover quickly and reopen your business.

**NOTE:** If guidance cannot be completed under safe operating conditions, hire a licensed and insured contractor.

### ACTIVATE THE “AFTER-EVENT” PHASE OF YOUR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

- Make sure guests, clients, and employees are safe.
- Be prepared to evacuate if structural damage from snow and ice makes a building unsafe.
- Stay away from downed powerlines.

### BEGIN SNOW AND ICE REMOVAL

- Safety first! Shovel after each snowfall. Take breaks to avoid overexertion.
- Shovel or use a snowblower to clear the parking lot and sidewalks surrounding the building free of snow and ice.
- Keep ice melt/salt on the ground to prevent slips and falls.
- Place non-slip mats in front of entryways to prevent slipping as employees and customers enter/exit your property.

### WATCH WINTRY ACCUMULATION AND CLEAN THE ROOF

- Monitor your roof's snow load to ensure it does not exceed its maximum capacity (determined by a structural engineer). This can be assessed visually or by measuring the snow and ice equivalent. Things to note while assessing the accumulation on the roof:
  - When determining the weight of snow, the type of snow is as important as the depth of the snow. Fresh powder snow is typically lighter than wet packed snow, and ice is heavier than snow.
  - There are several factors that can add to the load on a roof, including snow drifts from adjacent buildings, mechanical equipment, heavy rain on snow, and melting snow that re-freezes.

- Safely remove excessive snow and ice dams using your snow removal team.

### USE YOUR GENERATOR DURING POWER OUTAGES

*Note: Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for proper generator use.*

#### **Portable generator**

- Portable generators should be operated outside in a well-ventilated area. Use extreme caution when determining where to operate a generator.
- Portable generators should never be left running unattended and should be checked periodically.
- Portable generators should not be fueled while hot.
- Do not let snow accumulate on top of a portable generator.

#### **Permanent generator**

- Permanent generators are more self-sufficient than portable models but should be monitored periodically while they are in operation.

### ASSESS YOUR BUILDING AND DOCUMENT ANY DAMAGE

#### **Inside**

- Watch for signs of snow load damage, such as creaking sounds, a sagging roof, cracks in the ceiling or walls, water stains and door or windows that no longer open and close correctly.
- Check for flowing water from faucets. If water isn't flowing and you suspect frozen pipes:
  - Shut off the water supply.
  - Call a plumber to make repairs for any burst pipes.

#### **Outside**

- If a utility line is damaged or may become damaged, call the utility company. Stay away from any downed power lines.
- Assess downed trees or large limbs that may fall.
  - If it's on your property, parking lot or entrance, call a tree care professional.
  - If it's on a road or sidewalk, call your municipal public works department.

#### **Document damage**

- Create a list and take photos or videos to document any property losses.

### FOR BUILDING DAMAGE, CONTACT YOUR INSURER AND MITIGATE FURTHER DAMAGE

- Contact your insurance agent as soon as possible. Have information available, such as contact information, policy number, and type and date of loss. You will be assigned a claim number and adjuster who will work with you.
- Keep receipts and documentation for any services conducted. Consider creating an electronic file for this information in a cloud storage account so you can access it from anywhere.
- Mitigate further damage by hiring a reputable roofer to place a tarp over your damaged roof and/or a restoration service for water removal before mold becomes an issue.
- If it's safe to do so and recommended by your insurer, remove property from the damaged area to a safe storage area.