

Instructions for Sample Disaster Management Plan

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Contents

Coping with Disaster: Your Emergency Management Plan	3
Developing the Emergency Management Plan	3
Implementing the Emergency Plan	6
Repairing the Damage of Fire or Flood.....	7
Health Concerns about Water Damage.....	11
Assessing Risk and Protecting the Investment	11
Review of Tenant Leases	11
Determining Appropriate Insurance Coverage	12
The Manager’s Concern During a Crisis.....	12
Repairing the Damage	13
Conclusion	13
Determining the Scope and Value of the Loss	13
Notifying the Insurance Company	13
Determining the scope of the Loss.....	13
Assessing Damage and Loss.....	14
Conclusion	14
Key Terms and Phrases.....	15
Some facets of the insurance policy:.....	15
Types of Losses:	15
References	16

Coping with Disaster: Your Emergency Management Plan

Developing the Emergency Management Plan

Preparing for a disaster may seem daunting, but having a plan in place beforehand will save you a lot of time and thousands of dollars when a frustrating and expensive flood or fire emergency occurs.

Step 1: Gather Important Information

Before a disaster occurs is the time to gather all crucial information and to make sure that all systems are functioning properly. It's important to know specifically what equipment exists in a building and how it operates. You should have details pertaining to your building and its occupants on hand.

I. Occupational Information

Gather contact information and specific functions for each office or area of the building. This will give you an idea of any flammable materials that may be on hand. Vital information you need to document includes:

- a. Disabled individuals and their locations. Are there designated people assigned to assist in their evacuation? This list must be constantly updated and should be given to the fire chief immediately upon his arrival at the scene.
- a. Names and home phone numbers of individual office managers or assigned contact persons for each space or area of operation.
- b. Types of businesses or operations in the building, descriptions of any flammable material used in a space (specific chemical/material names are preferable) and special electrical uses in particular areas of the building.
- c. Insurance companies, including your own insurance carrier and agent, as well as those of your tenants. This will allow you to better deal with adjusters when they begin arriving to assess the damages.

II. Building Systems

Note pertinent information about building systems, such as:

- a. Sprinkler system – Where are the sprinkler heads? How are they activated? Is it a wet or a dry system? Who services it? Where are the shut-offs?
- b. Security system – Is it tied directly to the police and fire departments or is there an independent monitoring service? What activates the system?
- c. Smoke evacuation system – Where are fans and controls located? Are they isolated individually or wired in series?

- d. Emergency lighting/generator – Know where the generator is located and how it operates. How long will that power last? Is there a sufficient fuel supply?

III. Blue Prints

Blue prints are essential for enabling the fire department to locate mechanical equipment, elevators, stairwells, roof accesses, etc. Store prints for each floor in a safe location, noting the following emergency control locations:

- a. Stand pipe
- b. Roof accesses
- c. Shut-offs to water and utilities
- d. Emergency generator

IV. Keys

Put several sets of keys aside for emergency use. When the fire chief, security staff, and other emergency crews arrive at the site, they need immediate access to the building and to all spaces within it. Include on each key ring:

- a. Master keys for the entire building
- b. Fireman's recall keys for elevators

V. Service Contractors

Note the names and phone numbers of the contractors and vendors who you will need to contact immediately, including:

- a. Utility companies – Gas, water, electric, telephone and cable
- b. Disaster restoration contractor – Don't wait until an emergency to force you to select a restoration contractor quickly. Look for the best services and a contractor willing to work when your disaster strikes, whether it's Sunday night or even Christmas Eve.
- c. Plumber
- d. Electrician
- e. Elevator contractor
- f. HVAC contractor
- g. Electronic security contractor
- h. Security guard services

Step 2: Develop a Relocation Plan

When disaster strikes occupants may need a new place to sleep or work. Planning ahead will not only make your job easier, it will promote good will at a difficult time. Be knowledgeable about the market and have the following information available:

- I. Residential Buildings
 - a. Red Cross phone number
 - b. Salvation Army phone number
 - c. Names and phone numbers of other service agencies that will help in an emergency
 - d. Names and phone numbers of nearby hotels, motels and churches
- II. Commercial Buildings
 - a. Names and phone numbers of local real estate agents
 - b. Names and phone numbers of nearby buildings with vacant space

Step 3: Establish a Chain of Command

Decide who will be in charge during an emergency and designate specific responsibilities of all staff.

- I. Prepare a list of building staff – Include names, phone numbers, beeper numbers and an assigned calling order. Who will make the phone calls? You can assign a specific person, or outline a calling chain. See if your answering service will assume this responsibility in an emergency.
- II. Determine who will talk with the fire chief – Having a single contact person who is familiar with the building and occupants will eliminate a lot of confusion.
- III. Assign one person to handle public relations – Depending on the size of your building and the emergency at hand, you can expect the press to cover the situation. Designate someone to field their questions.
- IV. Decide who can authorize emergency work – Acting quickly and appropriately immediately after an emergency has occurred can save time and costs in the restoration work. Your disaster restoration contractor can assist you, although you'll need to authorize the work. Know who can authorize this work and the limits to which it can be authorized. You may want to talk this over with the property owner and your insurance agent.
- V. Identify your Command Post – Preferably, this would be off-site but within view of your property. Perhaps the building across the street has a lobby which could be used.

- VI. Designate one person to cover an Information Center – Someone needs to remain at the command post to relay information to all parties involved.
- VII. Develop an Evacuation Plan – It's critical that all exits be clearly marked and the staff knows their responsibilities. Include the following in your Evacuation Plan:
 - a. Maps and evacuation routes – Clearly post them in common areas and stairwells. A map of the stairwells in the building and where they lead should be posted at every stairwell landing.
 - b. Regular fire drills – Plan for both announced and unannounced drills.
 - c. Disabled individuals – Know their location and have a plan for their evacuation, and remember the elevators may not be available. Know the specific disabilities; planning safe evacuation for someone in a wheelchair will be different than planning for a deaf person who will not hear the fire alarm.

Implementing the Emergency Plan

During a disaster it is generally best to step back and let the professionals do their work. However, there are certain things you should do when implementing your plan.

- I. Operationalize evacuation – Make sure everyone gets out of the building safely. Know what floors have been evacuated and be able to update the fire chief on the status of the evacuation as soon as he arrives. Precious time can be saved with good information.
- II. Establish the Command Post.
- III. Make important phone calls, including:
 - a. Insurance agent – Inform about the loss.
 - b. The owner – Inform about the loss and get permission for emergency repairs that may become necessary.
 - c. Elevator contractor – Certify proper operation of the elevators as soon as possible after the disaster. Functional elevators will be tremendously helpful for the cleanup and restoration work.
 - d. Disaster restoration contractor – They will help you with the things that must be done immediately to minimize damage and control losses, so don't wait until the next day to make this call. Restoration work can begin as soon as the building is safe to enter.

- IV. Operationalize your relocation plan – This needs to happen immediately, particularly in a residential building. If it looks as if the building will be unsafe to re-enter, you will need to find temporary shelter or office space for your building occupants.

Repairing the Damage of Fire or Flood

Secure the Building

- I. Inspect the building with the disaster contractor or fire chief.
 - a. Determine which areas are safe.
 - b. Identify any life-threatening situations.
 - c. Determine if occupants can return.
- II. Implement loss prevention techniques where possible.

Some of these recommendations will need to be administered by trained and experienced professionals to minimize damage and control loss, while others may be handled by your maintenance staff. In all cases, being familiar with the techniques for dealing with various types of damage will ensure that your building is properly restored.

- a. Fire and smoke damage
 - i. Before you enter the affected area:
 - a. Be sure the power is off. Generally, the power company will have been called to the scene and will have terminated the power. If not, shut off the power to the affected area before entering.
 - b. Make sure the natural gas is off.
 - c. Conduct a small safety meeting with those planning to enter the area:
 - DO NOT enter any area without permission of the fire chief.
 - Wear hard hats if there has been any structural or ceiling damage.
 - Wear hard-soled shoes, not sneakers.
 - Wear respirators if the building is still smoking or smoldering.
 - DO NOT enter any affected area and light a match. Light must be provided by non-sparking flashlights. NO SMOKING!

- ii. Perform the following tasks immediately:
 - a. Open all windows for ventilation. If available, insert a fire box fan into the window for high power ventilation.
 - b. Clean and protect metal surfaces (chrome and brass trim, for example) with a light coating petroleum jelly or other oil to inhibit oxidation.
 - c. In DRY areas, brush or vacuum smoke particulate from furnishings, draperies and carpet.
 - d. DO NOT attempt to wash walls, ceilings or other porous surfaces.
 - e. DO NOT use electric equipment or appliances until checked and cleaned.
 - f. DO NOT use any upholstered furniture.
 - g. Dispose of all food and canned goods exposed to excessive heat. For retail establishments in the food industry, the Health Department will determine which items, if any, can be salvaged.
 - h. Remove all clothing from the premises and have them deodorized and cleaned immediately. Improper cleaning may set smoke and odor damage permanently.
 - i. Drain down all heating, plumbing and sprinkler systems during the winter in regions where freezing can occur. Pour antifreeze into all traps.

b. Water damage

Water damage can occur due to a number of occurrences, such as fire fighting techniques, burst plumbing lines, or a leaky roof. With a fire, water often causes more damage than the fire itself. Follow the guidelines outlined below to control water damage and minimize loss.

- i. Before entering the affected area:
 - a. Make sure power is off.
 - b. Hold a small safety meeting for everyone planning to enter the affected area:
 - Beware of falling plaster.

- Watch out for light fixtures that might fall.
 - Be careful on wet flooring.
- ii. Perform the following tasks immediately:
- a. Locate the source of the water and shut it off.
 - b. Poke small weep holes in wet ceilings to allow the water to drain. Be sure to place buckets underneath.
 - c. Remove furnishings if possible. Those items most greatly and immediately affected by water damage include:
 - Electronic equipment
 - Anything made of wood or cellulose fibers
 - Books
 - Artwork
 - d. Block-up furnishings which cannot be moved to a dry location. Pieces of wood or Styrofoam are good for this task. Be careful not to place anything with a dye or color in it directly on wet carpeting.
 - e. DO NOT turn the heat up high. Too much heat can actually accelerate damage. Try to maintain an even temperature of 72° F.
 - f. Begin removing water:
 - Extract carpeting.
 - Towel-dry furnishings with absorbent cloths.
 - Open drawers and doors of furniture to prevent them from swelling shut, but do not force.
 - g. Retail tenants should immediately do an inventory of damaged items. The items should then be removed, dried and cleaned. Salvage value is generally assessed by the insurance adjuster.
- iii. Prevent potential structural damage.
- a. Open drywall at the bottom of the walls to allow air movement and drying within the wall.

- b. Remove wet fiberglass insulation if necessary, or dry it if possible.
 - c. Take care of wet flooring:
 - Lift carpet and install carpet dryers.
 - Remove and discard wet padding.
 - Be sure to wear gloves when removing tack strips. If skin is punctured, serious infections can occur from the bacteria inherent with water damage.
 - If hardwood floors are covered with carpeting, the carpet must be removed and the floor dried beneath it.
 - d. Professionally dehumidify. Ordinary household dehumidifiers will not properly dry down your building.
- iv. Electronics
- a. Spray electronic systems (elevators, generators, security system control panels, etc.) with a recommended critical contact cleaner. This will prevent the corrosion of electronic components.
 - b. Dehumidification is also important to reduce risk of corrosion in computer equipment, phone systems, copiers and other electronic equipment.
- v. Health issues
- a. Access ductwork to dry it. Properly treat ductwork with antimicrobial treatment so that mold, fungi and bacteria do not regenerate the air handling equipment and ductwork systems.
 - b. Beware of crumbling pipe insulation and ceiling material that may contain asbestos.
 - c. Apply antimicrobial treatment to any other water-affected areas.

Health Concerns about Water Damage

In today's enlightened era of environmental health, proper water damage restoration is clearly imperative. There is more to water restoration than merely extracting water from carpet and pad. Controlling and terminating the growth of bacteria, mold, and mildew is the primary concern.

With interior temperature, it is important to note that mildew is not active under temperatures of 75° F. Its most prolific atmosphere is between 75° F and 85° F. At above 85° F, mildew returns to a dormant state; above 115° F it dies.

Bacteria, however, differs in its climatic preferences. Some survive below freezing, while others are active to temperatures above 150° F. As with mildew, its preferred temperature for growth is 75° F.

Water damage restoration must be performed by trained technicians who understand proper procedures and chemical applications. Trained professionals adjust the environment by altering temperature and humidity levels to deter production of mold, mildew, and bacteria.

The property owner or manager must remain alert to the following signs of microbial growth:

1. Musty, stuffy odors
2. Black or gray patches along bottom of walls
3. Deterioration of jute backing on carpet or dust covers on the bottom of furniture

Water-damaged building interiors provide a prime environment for mildew and bacteria to grow and reproduce. Both are parasitic and rely on dead or decaying organic matter for food. One of the favorite foods for bacteria and mildew is the decaying organic jute backing of carpets. This, coupled with warm humid air, creates the ideal environment for reproduction. Mold and mildew may cause allergic reactions, such as depression, arthritis, puffy eyes, chronic cough, rheumatism asthma, or headache.

Assessing Risk and Protecting the Investment

The most critical tasks that the property owner or risk manager needs to perform must occur prior to the emergency. The manager has a duty to assess and minimize risk to the building, to the owner, and to the tenants. To this end, a manager should set up an emergency contingency plan which is both proactive *before* the potential crisis and reactive *during* the crisis.

Review of Tenant Leases

The first step in implementing a proactive emergency contingency plan should be a comprehensive review of all of the leases. This lease assessment should help to define the

relationship between you and your tenants. There are many threshold questions which must be answered as a part of this analysis. The following are several of the more important questions:

1. Who is responsible for insuring the leased premises?
2. To the extent that it differs from the leased premises, who is responsible for insuring the building?
3. Who is responsible for insuring the contents of the leased premises?
4. What are the insurance amounts called for in the lease? How much damage does there have to be before the leased premises is considered not habitable?
5. What duty does the tenant have to pay rent if the leased premises are not habitable?

The answers to these and other pertinent questions should form a written report which will help you assess the disaster risk for the building.

Determining Appropriate Insurance Coverage

Most well-drafted leases specify insurance types and amounts which each party is to provide. Leases usually obligate tenants to provide certificates of insurance to the landlord on a regular basis. As part of a disaster plan, a manager should collect these certificates in a timely manner to insure that coverage is being maintained. Listed below are some of the questions to consider when reviewing your tenants' certificates of insurance:

1. Are their insurance carriers reputable?
2. Are the coverage amounts as agreed upon in the lease?
3. Even if the amounts are as agreed, are the amounts sufficient to cover the risk, which is being insured?

Once all of this research has been completed, a meeting with your attorney and insurance carrier will help to determine if all risks inherent in operating the building are being covered. Between you and your tenants, are the policy amounts sufficient to cover potential building damage, loss of rents, or potential personal injury damages?

The Manager's Concern During a Crisis

All of the planning as described here can only make a disaster less costly. Once a disaster occurs, a manager must have the ability to react to a variety of difficult situations. A competent point person must be on call at all times, with the ability to assess a crisis situation and make instant decisions. The person must have the authority to close a building if necessary.

Obviously, the safety of the persons and property in a building are paramount. In the long run, it will be much less expensive to look to your insurance carrier for several days of rent loss than to look to your carrier for liability coverage if people are injured in the building. Being well prepared in advance will preclude negligence during a crisis situation.

Repairing the Damage

After the disaster has been abated and the building has been stabilized, it is the property manager's responsibility to have the building repaired and operational as quickly as possible. By working with your restoration contractor and the insurance adjuster, prompt decisions regarding the scope and value of the loss can be made. Once the scope has been agreed upon, the work can begin.

The determination of fault should not delay getting the building back into operation. Generally the insurance company will approve the repairs, even if caused by the negligence of a tenant, and subrogate the claim later with the responsible party. The manager should assist the insurance company in such a claim by providing all relevant information. The main goal, however, is to repair the damage.

Conclusion

One of the property manager's primary responsibilities is to make sure that his building is adequately insured against risk. Determining the nature of these risks, as well as the types and amounts of coverage necessary, must be an ongoing process. Review of tenants' leases and stated insurance requirements will alert the manager to any changes which must be made. These tasks must be completed regularly so that when a disaster strikes, costs can be minimized and buildings operationalized as quickly as possible.

Determining the Scope and Value of the Loss

Notifying the Insurance Company

The insured (owner/manager) or the agent for the insured should notify the insurance agent or the carrier directly to inform them of the loss. In cases of theft or vandalism the police should also be notified. Generally, the insurance company will require a copy of the police report before processing the claim.

Immediately after a loss occurs, the insured should take whatever measures are necessary to protect the property from further damage, i.e. temporary repairs, water extraction, securing against ingress, shoring, etc. The insured should keep accurate records of all emergency repairs and expenses incurred to be turned over to the adjuster.

Determining the Scope of the Loss

The scope and value of the loss will be determined by the insurance carrier's adjuster working closely with the property owner or manager and designated restoration contractor or technical consultant. Before meeting with the adjuster, the manager prepares a brief description of the events that transpired prior to the loss. Gather information concerning the losses of tenants affected by the loss. Material and equipment specifications for components of the building will also be important to assist the adjuster in properly valuing the loss.

Assessing Damage and Loss

In determining the scope of the loss, you usually begin in the room that was the source of the loss. It is here that damage is likely to be most severe and the scope of repair most complete. The scope determined for this room will be used later as a guideline for determining the work to be done elsewhere.

Each portion of the room or task to be completed is itemized by size, description of damage, and units of measurement involved. For example, you may determine that 75 square yards of carpeting is saturated or 150 square feet of ceiling has collapsed. A decision is then made to repair, replace, or restore the damaged area. This decision is usually made between the adjustor and the restoration contractor and is contingent upon several considerations, such as the type of material to be used, the installation and application of that material, and type of finish.

In most cases, restoration is preferable to replacement, unless the cost of restoration far exceeds replacement cost. Restoration is also preferred when the element of the construction is unique or no longer readily available. For example, restoring the finish or handmade arbor-styled hinges on a church entry is preferable to replacement because the cost of recreating the original product would be excessive.

When considering any scope work, the materials to be used must be of like-kind and quality to the original construction. This will ensure that the finished product is as similar as possible to the original.

Damaged contents must be either replaced or cleaned and restored, depending upon the severity of the damage. Your restoration contractor will be able to inventory, pack, and transport the contents to a storage facility until the work is complete. Items that require dry cleaning can be inventoried and sent to be deodorized and cleaned before odor sets. Damaged furnishings can be removed, restored, and warehoused until restoration is complete.

The adjustor will provide inventory sheets for contents items damaged beyond restoration. These total loss items will be listed along with a description of the item, brand name and serial number, model number, age and quantity. Keeping a prepared inventory sheet on file for all contents which includes this information could eliminate costly hours trying to remember all of the items, which were completely destroyed by fire.

Conclusion

The more information that you can bring to the table in your meetings with the adjustor, the better your chances of receiving an equitable settlement. Proper organization of information prior to any loss will make claims resolution swifter and easier. Be well prepared; be knowledgeable about your lease requirements and related insurance requirements. Having a plan for coping with disaster will permit you to minimize any loss to your owner as well as minimizing frustration and anguish with your tenants and your staff.

Key Terms and Phrases

The property manager must be familiar with key components of the insurance policy in order to be communicative with and understanding of the adjustor.

Some facets of the insurance policy:

Peril	The cause of the loss. Usual insurance perils include fire, explosion, wind, burglary, negligence, collision, accident, sickness and death. Policies often cover more than one peril.
Specified Peril Contract	The policy identifies the particular perils which are covered.
All Risk/Open Contract	The policy covers all perils except those specifically excluded.
Proximate Cause of Loss	The direct or effective cause of the loss

Types of Losses:

Direct Loss	Physical destruction of property.
Loss of Income	Loss of income from the property such as rental income.
Spoilage	Caused by particular perils.
Extra Expenses	Costs incurred due to the loss of use of your property such as additional vehicle mileage if you are forced to live further away from your employment.
Salvage	Property, equipment, etc. that the insurance company retains to attempt to reduce the total dollar loss.
Actual Cash Value	Replacement cost of property less accumulated depreciation. This means physical depreciation, not cost recovery.
Depreciation	An adjustment-to-value based on physical age, deterioration, obsolescence, and geographic market value.
Replacement Cost	Cost to replace the damaged property with like kind and quality.
Co-Insurance Clause	Specifies the amount of recovery you will receive on a partial loss if the property is not insured for a specified amount of the property's cash value.

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