



# WINTER STORM PREPAREDNESS

**A GUIDE FOR COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES**

# WINTER STORM PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST

Cotton Global Disaster Solutions knows that weather doesn't take a day off, so neither do we. In the winter months, building managers can be faced with costly damages and interrupted business caused by ice dams, frozen pipes, collapsed roofs, and faulty or unattended heating equipment. Cotton understands that despite these unexpected threats, it is essential to limit any amount of business interruption to protect your revenue and reputation.

While there's no way to completely predict what mother nature holds in store, proper planning and preparations can lessen the impact of winter weather on your commercial property and expedite your business's recovery. Cotton's team of winter disaster recovery experts have prepared the following checklist to ensure your business is ready to face the winter season. If you have recently experienced a winter loss or would like to schedule a consultation, contact our 24-hour hotline and a representative will respond immediately - **877.900.8030**.

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## PRE-WINTER PLANNING

Assess your facility's vulnerability to winter weather-related losses through a complete review of equipment and infrastructure susceptibility to hard freezes, snow and ice fall, and wind.

Develop a comprehensive Emergency Response Plan that includes winter weather threats and identifies the roles and responsibilities of everyone within the company.

Predetermine your snow and ice removal plan, whether handling internally or utilizing an outside contractor.

Identify restoration partners in advance so that you can expedite your recovery in case of a loss.

Implement freeze-protection devices and alarms near all critical infrastructure that is at risk of freezing during a winter weather event.

Review your snow removal equipment such as snow blowers and plows to ensure they are sufficiently maintained in addition to auditing fuel and oil supplies.

Invest in slip-resistant flooring or mats if your facility has high foot traffic from either employees or guests.

Evaluate your exterior lighting to prevent public safety issues related to darker business hours of operation.

Consider investing in backup generators to secure power if your facility requires a constant supply of electricity for sensitive data or inventory.

Audit your commercial insurance policy to determine if you are exposed to any additional liabilities as a result of damage from winter weather.

Establish a notification system for employees or guests to alert them in the case of facility closure or weather hazard.

## PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

Review your HVAC system for cracks and leaks, blockages in blowers or hoses, performance of air vents and air flow, and the quality of your air filters.

Inspect roofing for holes, damage or leaks that could allow for snowmelt to enter the property.

Check for loose shingles and roofing panels in addition to repairing any malfunction of existing seals and flashing to ensure the roof is structurally ready for withstanding winter weather.

Inspect insulation for holes or compromised areas that might allow for heat loss or for cold air to enter.

Eliminate drafts that are created by gaps in doors and windows by restoring all weather stripping and caulking.

Investigate exposed pipes for cracks, openings, and signs of excessive moisture which must be sealed and insulated to prevent breaks or ruptures.

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## IMPENDING WINTER WEATHER

Service all heating systems and verify that all are working and maintaining correct temperatures.

Shut off, drain, and winterize any sprinkler, fire pump test header, hydrant, or irrigation system until warmer weather returns in the Spring.

Test freeze stats, valves, and freeze-protection devices to determine if they are ready for the incoming temperature drop.

Ensure dry sprinkler systems have reliable air, have adequate specific gravity, and are pitched to low point drains.

Wrap pipes and faucets that are located in unheated or minimally heated areas.

Clear gutters and drainage infrastructure of leaves and other debris that has accumulated during the Fall months to allow for proper drainage.

Inspect the condition of trees and power lines to avoid unnecessary power outages as a result of downed lines or damage to property.

Review lockout/tagout procedures for power and electrical systems in case repair or service becomes necessary.

Monitor local meteorological and weather reporting throughout the season to easily anticipate hard freezes and snowfall.

Train employees who will be regularly exposed to the elements to recognize the warning signs of cold weather exposure.

Prepare commercial vehicles for winter conditions, particularly if they will frequently be driven on snow, and review winter driving safety with your employees.



## DURING WINTER WEATHER

Employ your snow clearing protocol to ensure your facility is protected from pileup & collapse in addition to securing the safety of the space for employees and guests.

Maintain an adequate supply of fuel for both snow-clearing equipment and any production equipment that cannot withstand a shutoff.

Keep gutters clear throughout the season to prevent excessive ice buildup and allow for more efficient runoff from snow melt.

Sprinkle salt or other material on snow-covered parking lots and sidewalks to increase vehicle traction and prevent slips & falls.

Keep facility temperature above 50 degrees at all times, even if not currently occupied, to prevent pipe freeze-up and rupture.

Monitor internal temperatures, freeze-up alarms and critical infrastructure during hard freezes so that you can move quickly in the case of a necessary thaw-out or restoration.

Back-up sensitive computer data frequently to avoid the risk of loss during a winter power outage.

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## AFTER WINTER HAS PASSED

Assess the damage caused by winter weather including cracks in surfaces, sinkholes, roof damage, leaking windows or otherwise and be sure to document any discoveries immediately.

Look for new leaks and blockages in your drainage systems and restore them before the Spring rainy season.

Pick up and discard any stray debris that has been left behind by snowmelt, wind, and rain runoff.

Perform checks of HVAC, plumbing, and critical infrastructure to ensure they successfully weathered the Winter.

Contact a restoration partner like Cotton GDS immediately if any major loss is discovered to ensure your property is adequately prepared for the rain and heat of Spring and Summer.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

[\*Winter Safety Hazards\*](#)

[\*Severe Winter Weather Damage Restoration\*](#)

[\*Business Continuity Planning Checklist\*](#)

[\*Additional Tips to Prepare Your Commercial Property For Winter Weather\*](#)