



# **Water Damage Response Guide for Businesses**

Provided by Venbrook Insurance

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# Introduction

Water damage can strike a devastating blow to businesses, leading to extensive property damage, financial losses and operational disruptions. From burst pipes and roof leaks to natural disasters like floods and storms, the potential for water-related disasters is a threat that no business can afford to ignore. For a business, having a comprehensive water damage prevention plan is not just a precautionary measure—it's a strategic imperative. This plan is necessary to safeguard a business's physical assets, protect its financial stability and ensure the continuity of operations.

This guide will explore the critical reasons why a water damage prevention plan is an essential component of any business's risk management strategy and how it can mean the difference between an effective and ineffective response in the face of water-related emergencies.

After reviewing the guide's content, property or business owners should review the water damage prevention plan and checklist to help assist them in evaluating their premises for water damage risks and responding appropriately in the event of an incident .



## How Does Water Damage Occur?

Water damage in commercial properties can occur through various sources and situations. Understanding these potential causes is essential for effective prevention and mitigation. Here are some common ways water damage can occur in commercial properties:

1. **Plumbing Failures:** Leaking or burst pipes, faulty plumbing fixtures and damaged supply lines can lead to water damage. These failures can result from aging infrastructure, corrosion, freezing temperatures or excessive water pressure.
2. **Roof Leaks:** Roof leaks can occur due to damaged or deteriorating roofing materials, clogged gutters, blocked roof drains, or the penetration of debris and tree branches. Heavy rainfall or melting snow can exacerbate roof-related issues.
3. **HVAC System Issues:** Air conditioning units, heating systems and ventilation systems can generate condensation or develop leaks. Improper maintenance, clogged drains or faulty components within these systems can contribute to water damage.
4. **Foundation and Structural Damage:** Poor drainage, cracks in the building's foundation or inadequate waterproofing can allow groundwater or rainwater to seep into basements and lower levels, causing structural damage and water infiltration.
5. **Flooding:** Events such as heavy rain, storms, flash floods or rising groundwater levels can result in flooding. Inadequate drainage systems or improper grading around the property can exacerbate flood-related damage.
6. **Sprinkler System Malfunctions:** Fire sprinkler systems can malfunction due to manufacturing defects, frozen pipes, corrosion or accidental activation. A faulty sprinkler system can release a significant amount of water quickly.
7. **Appliance and Equipment Failures:** Malfunctions or leaks from appliances such as water heaters, dishwashers, refrigeration units, and ice machines can cause water damage in commercial kitchens and utility areas.
8. **Human Error:** Accidental spills, negligence or errors during maintenance or construction work can lead to water damage. For example, a contractor may damage a water supply line while performing renovations.
9. **Storm Damage:** Severe weather events, including hurricanes, tornadoes and heavy storms, can result in significant water intrusion and damage to commercial properties, especially if the building envelope is compromised.
10. **Sewage Backups:** Sewer line blockages, sewage system overflows or sewage backups can introduce contaminated water into commercial properties, posing health risks and extensive damage.
11. **Window and Door Seal Failures:** Damaged or deteriorated seals around windows and doors can allow rainwater to penetrate the building, leading to water damage over time.
12. **Vandalism and Property Damage:** Deliberate acts of vandalism or property damage, such as puncturing water pipes, can cause water damage to commercial properties.

- 13. Industrial System Failures:** Failures or leaks from industrial systems and equipment not covered in the above categories can also contribute to water damage. These systems may include specialized machinery, production processes or water containment systems used in industrial settings.

Preventing water damage to commercial properties involves maintenance, regular inspections, swift response to leaks or issues and having a well-defined water damage prevention plan in place. By addressing potential sources of water damage and maintaining the property properly, commercial property owners can reduce the risk of costly and disruptive water-related incidents.



# How To Prevent Water Damage from Occurring

Preventing water damage in commercial properties is crucial to protect assets, maintain business operations and avoid costly repairs. Here are essential steps to help prevent water damage in commercial properties:

## Regular Maintenance and Property Inspections

Business owners should schedule or perform regular inspections and maintenance for plumbing systems, roofs, HVAC units and other water-related components within the property. During these inspections, they should carefully check for any signs of leaks, loose connections or indications of wear and tear. Additionally, business owners should ensure that all equipment is maintained and serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations to prevent potential water-related problems from arising.

## Proactive Roof Maintenance

To effectively safeguard against water damage in commercial properties, it's imperative that property owners perform regular roof maintenance. This involves conducting routine inspections to check for any signs of damage, such as missing shingles or deteriorating sealant. It's also essential they keep the gutters and downspouts clean and clear of debris to ensure proper drainage. In the event that any issues are identified during these inspections, business owners should make prompt repairs to prevent potential leaks and subsequent damage.

## Proper Drainage

To prevent water damage, it's vital to focus on drainage solutions. Owners should ensure that the property boasts adequate drainage systems, encompassing properly functioning storm drains and appropriate grading that directs water away from the building's vicinity. Additionally, in flood-prone areas, business owners should install sump pumps to prevent water accumulation, offering an extra layer of protection against potential water-related issues.

## Seal Windows and Doors

To protect commercial properties against water damage, it's important business owners address vulnerabilities in the building envelope. They should regularly maintain and repair window and door seals to prevent water infiltration. Furthermore, business owners should consider enhancing protection by installing weatherstripping and additional waterproofing measures as needed.

## Inspect and Maintain HVAC Systems

Heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems can cause water damage in businesses. Business owners should regularly service and inspect HVAC units, paying close attention to drain pans and condensate lines to prevent leaks. Additionally, they should ensure that proper insulation and ventilation are in place to minimize the risk of condensation-related issues.

### Fire Sprinkler System Maintenance

Business owners should schedule routine inspections of fire sprinkler systems, meticulously checking for any potential issues that may arise. Additionally, it's crucial to have the system regularly tested to ensure its proper functionality, providing peace of mind in the event of a fire-related emergency.

### Regularly Check Appliances

Business owners should regularly inspect and maintain appliances such as water heaters, dishwashers, refrigeration units and ice machines to prevent leaks. This includes replacing faulty components when necessary.

### Water Detection Systems

All business owners should install water detection systems and alarms in critical areas, such as server rooms and basements. These systems can provide early warnings of leaks or rising water levels, providing protection from a more significant water-related incident.

### Proactive Exterior Maintenance

Business owners should inspect or have a professional inspect the building's exterior, including walls and foundation, for cracks and vulnerabilities. This should be done to ensure proper sealing and waterproofing is completed to prevent water intrusion.

### Drainage Maintenance

Business owners should have the debris cleared from outdoor drains, gutters and downspouts regularly to prevent blockages. In addition, they should consider landscaping features like swales and drainage channels to direct water away from the property if water retention around the building is a problem.

### Security Measures

Sometimes, water damage isn't due to a faulty system in the building but because someone intentionally damaged something in the building or outside the building that caused it. Business owners should install security systems to deter vandalism and acts of property damage that may lead to water damage.

By implementing these preventive measures and conducting regular maintenance, commercial property owners and managers can significantly reduce the risk of water damage and protect their investments.

# Why Is Water Damage Planning Important?

First and foremost, it serves as a safeguard for property and valuable assets. Water damage—whether from burst pipes, flooding or roof leaks—can lead to extensive structural damage and harm to valuable equipment, inventory and personal belongings. In fact, it's one of the most common and frequent causes of property damage. A prevention plan helps mitigate these risks, ultimately reducing the likelihood of costly repairs or replacements.



Furthermore, water damage can have a significant financial impact. Repair costs, business interruption and potential liabilities can result in substantial financial losses. By proactively implementing preventive measures, businesses can reduce these financial risks, helping to maintain stability and profitability.

Operational continuity is another vital aspect. Water damage incidents can disrupt business operations, leading to downtime, loss of productivity and missed opportunities. A prevention plan ensures that disruptions are minimized and that a swift recovery can be initiated when incidents occur, allowing businesses to maintain their competitive edge.

Insurance considerations are also critical. Many insurance providers require policyholders to take proactive steps to prevent water damage. Having a prevention plan in place not only lowers insurance premiums but also ensures compliance with policy requirements, simplifying the process of filing successful claims if the need arises.

Moreover, health and safety considerations come into play. Water damage can create hazardous conditions, including mold growth, electrical hazards and slippery surfaces. A well-executed prevention plan promotes the safety of occupants, employees, customers or tenants by minimizing these risks.

In terms of reputation management, water damage incidents can have a negative impact on a business's image. Frequent disruptions due to water-related issues can erode customer and client confidence. A prevention plan, on the other hand, demonstrates a commitment to safety and reliability, enhancing a company's reputation.

Furthermore, long-term cost savings are a compelling reason to invest in prevention. While implementing preventive measures may require an initial financial outlay, these investments can result in significant long-term savings by avoiding expensive emergency repairs, business interruptions and potential legal disputes.

Environmental considerations should not be overlooked either. Water damage can have environmental consequences, particularly in cases involving chemical spills or sewage backups. Preventing such incidents helps protect the environment and avoids potential fines for environmental violations.

Lastly, community impact is worth noting. In the case of rental properties or businesses in shared buildings, water damage can affect neighboring properties or tenants. A well-structured prevention plan demonstrates responsible stewardship and consideration for the broader community.

Planning for water damage prevention is essential to protect property and financial stability, safeguard health and safety, and maintain a positive reputation. By investing in preventive measures and being prepared, businesses and individuals can significantly reduce the potential negative impacts of water-related emergencies.



### What Is a Water Damage Response Plan?

A water damage response plan is a comprehensive strategy that outlines how individuals, businesses or organizations should react and manage situations involving water-related emergencies or disasters. This plan is designed to mitigate the immediate and long-term damage caused by water intrusion, such as flooding, burst pipes, roof leaks or natural disasters like hurricanes or heavy storms. A well-structured water damage response plan typically includes the following key components:

- **Emergency Contact Information:** The plan should include a list of essential contacts, including local emergency services, water damage restoration professionals, insurance providers and key personnel within the organization responsible for executing the plan.
- **Response Team Roles and Responsibilities:** Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of individuals or teams involved in responding to water damage incidents. This includes designating a point person or team leader who coordinates the response efforts.
- **Immediate Action Steps:** Outline the initial actions that need to be taken as soon as water damage is discovered. This may include shutting off water sources, ensuring safety and evacuating if necessary.
- **Assessment and Documentation:** Describe how to assess the extent of the damage and document it effectively. This includes taking photographs, videos or written notes to support insurance claims and future repairs. Supporting documentation should include facility maps, water pipe maps with valve lists, fire protection valve list and a spill response inventory list.
- **Communication Plan:** Detail how communication will be handled during an incident. Specify how employees, tenants, clients and other relevant stakeholders will be informed about the situation and any necessary evacuation or safety measures.
- **Mitigation Strategies:** Explain the steps to mitigate further damage, such as removing excess water, drying affected areas and protecting valuable assets or inventory.
- **Contacting Professional Services:** Provide instructions on what restoration specialists, plumbers, electricians and other professionals to contact and when to contact them to address specific issues.
- **Insurance Procedures:** Include guidance on how to report the incident to your insurance provider, what information they may require and how to document the damage for insurance claims.
- **Restoration and Recovery:** Describe the process for restoring the property or business to its pre-damage condition. This may involve repairs, renovation and steps to prevent future incidents.
- **Review and Updates:** Emphasize the importance of regularly reviewing and updating the response plan to ensure it remains relevant and effective as circumstances change or new risks emerge.
- **Training and Drills:** Conduct training sessions and emergency drills to ensure that employees and stakeholders understand their roles and are prepared to act quickly and effectively during a water damage incident.

A water damage response plan is a proactive measure to minimize the impact of water-related disasters, protect assets and ensure the safety of individuals. It should be easily accessible, regularly reviewed and known to all relevant parties to facilitate a swift and effective response when a water damage emergency occurs.

# Water Damage Response Steps

## Water Damage Incident Pre-planning

Effective pre-planning is vital for businesses to mitigate the risks associated with water damage. To maintain the integrity and functionality of the building, regular inspections of the water and liquid systems should be conducted. These inspections are essential for identifying potential damage or wear and tear in various components, including plumbing, HVAC systems, automatic sprinkler systems, roofs, roof-mounted equipment, drains, downspouts and more.

If there is a notably high or distinctive risk of water infiltration or system leaks, these considerations should be taken when developing a water damage incident plan:

- Be ready to promptly report potential losses to the relevant insurance companies. Capture photographs or videos of damage and potentially affected areas. Secure and preserve any components that may have contributed to the incident.
- Establish prearranged agreements with a local rental or restoration company to ensure the availability of dehumidifiers, fans, blowers, pumps, etc.
- Set up agreements with a water extraction or restoration company that guarantees a timely response with professional equipment. It may be wise to have backup arrangements in place if the area is prone to frequent storms.

Furthermore, any signs of water leaks, such as stains or pooling, should be closely analyzed, and even small leaks promptly repaired. To enhance preparedness during emergencies, a detailed map of all water and liquid systems within the building should be created, with all water shut-off control valves clearly labeled for easy access. To maintain the effectiveness of these valves, maintenance should have a schedule to exercise and lubricate the valves at least annually to ensure they can be easily closed during water-related events. Additionally, staff members on each shift should be designated and trained to have the authority to shut off water valves in case of an incident. Businesses should consider integrating guaranteed response times into employee agreements and establish after-hours or emergency contact lists for these service providers.

To mitigate risks, a preventive maintenance program should be implemented, targeting vulnerable areas of exposure. The plan should be reviewed annually, and employees should be trained continuously, including new hires and annual refresher courses.

Businesses should consider providing at least one spill cart in every facility or one in every maintenance room. Mobile spill carts should be stored in various locations within your facility for use during the initial hours of an emergency. These materials are exclusively intended for emergency response to water leaks and should not be used for everyday purposes. Additional carts may be needed if the facility experiences frequent leaks or spills. The list below suggests a sample of tools that may be useful to stock on the accessible carts. Additional materials to absorb or contain spills could be added.

Quantity	Materials
	Plastic tarps
	Wet/dry vacuum
	Portable sump pump
	Dehumidifier
	Fan
	Pipe leak diverters
	Hoses
	Latex gloves
	Flashlights
	Diagrams of roof drains and water supply
	Caution tape
	Duct tape
	Face mask
	Safety glasses
	Hose clamp
	Five-gallon buckets
	Squeegees
	Sponges

In the event of on-site water damage, key personnel should be designated and administrative responsibilities defined so employees know their roles. An up-to-date list of emergency contacts must be maintained and a contingency plan established to address severely damaged areas, specifying procedures for relocating equipment and functions to ensure uninterrupted operations.

Furthermore, documenting valuables, maintaining emergency supplies, and conducting employee training and drills are critical to preparedness. Businesses should establish agreements with suppliers for emergency deliveries and be aware of local regulations related to water damage prevention. By consistently revisiting and refining these measures, businesses can proactively protect their assets, operations and personnel in the face of water damage incidents.

Water damage incident pre-planning should include the following inspection priorities:

- Conduct regular inspections of water and liquid systems.
- Prepare a water damage response cart.
- Inspect plumbing, HVAC systems, automatic sprinkler systems, roofs, roof-mounted equipment, drains, downspouts and other components.
- Closely analyze any signs of water leaks, such as stains or pooling.
- Ensure timely repair of even small leaks.
- Create a detailed map of all water and liquid systems within the building.
- Clearly label all water shut-off control valves for easy access.
- Designate and train staff members on each shift to have the authority to shut off water valves in case of an incident.

- ❑ Schedule annual maintenance to exercise and lubricate water shut-off valves to ensure they function smoothly during water-related events.
- ❑ Implement a preventive maintenance program targeting vulnerable areas of exposure.
- ❑ Review the plan annually and provide continuous training to employees, including new hires and refresher courses.
- ❑ Designate key personnel and define administrative responsibilities in the event of on-site water damage.
- ❑ Maintain an up-to-date list of emergency contacts.
- ❑ Establish a contingency plan for addressing severely damaged areas, including procedures for relocating equipment and functions.
- ❑ Document valuable assets and maintain emergency supplies.
- ❑ Conduct regular employee training and drills.
- ❑ Establish agreements with suppliers for emergency deliveries.
- ❑ Be aware of local regulations related to water damage prevention and compliance.
- ❑ Consistently revisit and refine these measures to proactively protect assets, operations and personnel from water damage incidents.
- ❑ Arrange access to large generators and fuel for powering pumps, wet/dry vacuums, dehumidifiers, blowers, etc., particularly if there is an elevated risk of power loss in the concerned area.
- ❑ Employ an after-hours/weekend security monitor capable of overseeing various risks, including theft, vandalism, trespassing, fire, power loss to critical systems (e.g., temporary heaters, dewatering pumps), water infiltration from storms and water release incidents.
- ❑ Install remote monitoring systems with cellular reporting capabilities. These systems can monitor for unauthorized access/intrusion, smoke/fire, temperature and humidity levels, water sensors, unusual changes in water flow for mechanical systems and more.

### Incident Response and Recovery

In the event of water damage, provided it's safe, designated personnel should be deployed to the affected area to initiate damage control. For leaks involving domestic water lines, piping or valves, it's crucial to locate the shut-off valve to isolate and minimize the damage.

When dealing with building structure leaks, such as leaky roof drains or windows, immediate action is necessary to redirect the water, contain the spill and prevent further water ingress into the building. If the structural integrity is compromised, temporary repairs may be needed to reduce water damage until a proper cleanup and restoration can be carried out. If the situation cannot be managed internally, contact the local fire department for assistance.

Immediate mitigation measures should be initiated, employing tools like pumps, vacuums and squeegees to promptly remove excess water. Additionally, the use of barriers, absorbent socks and other containment methods is essential to prevent the further spread of water. To safeguard nearby equipment from additional damage, protective measures should be implemented. Equally critical is the prevention of mold growth, requiring remediation to commence within 48 hours.

In the event of water damage, timely notification of both the risk manager and insurance provider is paramount to facilitate a swift response and resolution. Log the incident to have for reference and use for future training.

- Assess the situation and ensure it's safe for personnel.
- Deploy designated personnel to the affected area for damage control.
- For domestic water line or valve leaks, locate and shut off the shut-off valve to minimize damage.
- Take immediate action to redirect water from building structure leaks (e.g., roof drains and windows).
- Contain the spill and prevent further water ingress.
- Consider temporary repairs if structural integrity is compromised.
- If the situation cannot be managed internally, contact the local fire department for assistance.
- Use tools like pumps, vacuums and squeegees to promptly remove excess water.
- Employ barriers, absorbent socks and containment methods to prevent water spread.
- Implement protective measures for nearby equipment to prevent additional damage.
- Initiate remediation within 48 hours to prevent mold growth.
- Notify the risk manager and insurance provider promptly to facilitate a swift response and resolution.
- Log the incident for reference and future training purposes.



### Incident Cleanup

Cleanup after water damage in a business is essential to prevent further damage, protect assets, maintain operations, ensure compliance with regulations and uphold the business's reputation. Timely and thorough cleanup efforts are a critical part of mitigating the negative impacts of water damage. The following cleanup measures should be taken after the water leak has been identified and stopped:

- ❑ Conduct a thorough inspection of the affected area, carefully identifying the type of damage, the extent of affected areas and the potential impact on business operations.
- ❑ Get in touch with contractors and suppliers to arrange for the cleanup and restoration of affected areas. Additionally, notify other stakeholders, including tenants and management, about the incident.
- ❑ Establish an inventory of building equipment that has sustained damage and requires repair or replacement, such as electrical systems, HVAC units and interior finishing elements.
- ❑ Begin the operation of dehumidification equipment or fans to reduce the risk of mold growth.
- ❑ Execute a contingency plan for areas that have suffered extensive damage, potentially necessitating the relocation of business operations. Document the procedures for how business activities can be resumed at alternative facilities.
- ❑ Remove drywall or install access panels to facilitate airflow within the walls.
- ❑ Initiate the drying process, carry out cleaning procedures and apply rust-preventative coatings to mechanical and electrical equipment.
- ❑ Transfer salvageable and undamaged contents, stock and supplies to secure areas for protection.



### Water Damage Response Improvements

While no one wishes to experience a water damage incident, every business disruption presents an opportunity for improvement and growth. An examination of water damage incidents can reveal common shortcomings in response procedures. These deficiencies include:

- ❑ Limited accessibility to key equipment and supplies for addressing such events
- ❑ Inadequate testing and validation of the plan's components
- ❑ Unrealistic scenarios or failure to account for delayed water discovery
- ❑ Failure to consider the time required for shutting off water during unoccupied hours
- ❑ Insufficiently trained employees with unclear roles and responsibilities
- ❑ Contractors and other third parties lacking proper training on the location of crucial equipment and shut-off valves
- ❑ A lack of contingency planning for multi-point failures, such as the failure of a critical valve or alternative guidance for isolating water
- ❑ Absence of plans for responding to liquids escaping from adjacent tenants or occupants
- ❑ Poor communication between property owners, managers and tenants regarding access to key valves and responsible parties

In the face of these challenges, businesses have an opportunity to enhance their water damage incident response procedures, minimizing the impact of such events and promoting growth through improved preparedness.

# Appendix



# Water Damage Prevention and Response Plan

Location:

Effective Date: [Insert effective date]

Revision Number: 1

This sample water damage prevention plan should be customized on a per-organization basis to account for specific concerns and processes. It's not meant to be exhaustive or construed as legal advice. Consult additional risk management or an engineering professional for advice. Please modify this plan to meet your business needs, taking all relevant federal, state and local compliance requirements into account.

Every business, regardless of the industry it operates in or the products or services it offers, will likely face water damage at some point during its existence. This damage can threaten an organization's business continuity and even affect clients, donors and other third parties. If and when such an event occurs, it's critical that [insert company name here] is prepared to respond effectively.

To aid in our response efforts, this sample water damage prevention plan will be customized to meet the organization's unique needs in terms of preparing for and responding to water incidents. Additionally, this plan will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it accounts for:

- Organizational changes (e.g., acquiring new properties)
- The introduction of a new process or technology
- Staffing changes that affect [insert company name here] water incident response efforts
- New or unaccounted for exposures

## Goals of the Plan

- Protecting employees and the general public from serious injuries
- Preventing or minimizing damage to property, company finances, company assets or the environment
- Safeguarding the company's premise
- Maintaining operations or returning to business as usual following a disruption

## Water Damage Incidents

A water damage incident occurs when water damages a business and is often an incident that could have been avoided if the proper protocols were in place (e.g., regular maintenance and property inspections, proper drainage, or proactive roof maintenance). Additionally, a water damage incident could be a situation that's completely out of our control (e.g., hurricanes, tornadoes or heavy storms).

## Water Damage Response Team

To aid in our water damage incident response efforts, a water damage response management team has been created and is responsible for:

- Evaluating each water-related incident
- Determining the severity level of each water-related incident and responding appropriately
- Identifying outside experts to help address water mitigation or restoration efforts
- Responding to water-related incidents and implementing mitigation measures
- Crafting and executing communication strategies
- Reviewing and improving the water damage prevention plan and employee training on a regular basis

The emergency response team is made up of a response team leader, response coordinator, communications coordinator, claims coordinator and support staff. The following chart accounts for what those roles and responsibilities are:

Role	Employee	Office Phone	Cell Phone	Duties
Response Team Leader	[Assign]			
Alternate Person In Charge	[Assign]			
Response Coordinator	[Assign]			
Alternate Response Coordinator	[Assign]			
Claim Coordinator	[Assign]			
Alternate Claim Coordinator	[Assign]			
Communication Coordinator	[Assign]			
Support Staff	[Assign]			
[Insert additional emergency response team members]	[Assign]			

### Stakeholders

In the event of a water incident, it's crucial that [insert company name here] is able to communicate with key stakeholders and provide necessary updates. The chart below identifies these stakeholders that will need to be communicated with.

Stakeholders	Communication Channels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Insert stakeholder]</li> <li>[Insert stakeholder]</li> <li>[Insert stakeholder]</li> <li>[Insert stakeholder]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Insert communications channels]</li> </ul>

### Training

Annual training sessions and plan updates will be completed annually to guarantee that all involved parties have a complete understanding of their roles and duties.

Persons Responsible: [Assign]

### Ability to Respond

Primary and critical valves will be regularly tested annually to make sure they are in working order and able to securely close into the fully shut position.

Persons/Department Responsible: [Assign]

### Initiation of Plan

When a water leakage event is discovered, staff are trained to call [code of choice].

[Code of choice] is designed to alert both the Persons in Charge as well as the Response Coordinators.

[Maintenance] personnel are instructed by the Person in Charge to respond to the [code of choice] immediately and begin the Action Plan.

The Persons in Charge and Response Coordinators will collaborate to oversee response procedures and ensure strict adherence to the Action Plan.

Claims Coordinators will endeavor to reach out to affected Departments and provide them with instructions regarding the Action Plan procedures relevant to their claims.

The tasks outlined in the action plan will be carried out by the appropriate individuals within the water damage response team. These individuals have the authority to delegate tasks as needed.

The initial step in the emergency response plan should always be to **TURN OFF THE WATER.**

**Water Shut-off Valve Listing**

A detailed list of the water shut-off valves (for domestic, cooling and fire protection) can be found at [location].

[Please insert locations into the fields below that pertain to your facilities building]

**Main Valves**

Water shut off to the facility or an entire building.

Area Controlled	Type	Valve Location
[Building 1]	[Domestic]	[Building 1 Basement room B31]
[Building 1]	[Fire Protection]	
[Building 2]	[Domestic]	
[Building 2]	[Fire Protection]	

**Primary Valves**

Water shut off to floors, wings or large areas.

Area Controlled	Type	Valve Location

**Critical Valves**

Water shut off over critical equipment.

Area Controlled	Type	Valve Location

**Response Materials**

Mobile spill carts are stored in various locations within the facility for use during the initial hours of an emergency. These materials are exclusively intended for emergency response to water leaks and should not be used for everyday purposes.

These carts are located in the following locations:

- [Location 1:]
- [Location 2:]
- [Location 3:]

At least one spill cart has been provided in every facility or one in every maintenance room within the facility. Additional carts may be placed in the facility if it is an area that experiences frequent leaks or spills. The list below shows the tools that are in the spill carts:

Quantity	Materials
[Insert quantity of each]	Plastic tarps
	Wet/dry vacuum
	Portable sump pump
	Dehumidifier
	Fan

	Pipe leak diverters
	Hoses
	Latex gloves
	Flashlights
	Diagrams of roof drains and water supply
	Caution tape
	Duct tape
	Face mask
	Safety glasses
	Hose clamp
	5-gallon buckets
	Squeegees
	Sponges
	[Insert other supplies if applicable]

## Action Plan

This action plan identifies, mitigates, and manages the risks associated with water damage to a property or facility. The action plan for a water incident is as follows:

### Phase: Initial Response

Action	Responsibility	Resources
1. [Code of choice] is sounded upon discovery of a water leak.	All staff	Phone notification to persons in charge and response coordinators.
2. Affected area is identified. Assess any safety risks before entering.	[Assign]	
3. Identify probable valve controlling the water flow.	[Assign]	Valve list
4. Emergency response resources are brought to the scene.	[Assign]	Mobile spill cart
5. After confirming that essential services will not be affected, shut the valve.	[Assign]	

Closure of the water source (valve) and isolation of damage should be pursued concurrently when there is sufficient staff.

### Phase: Initial Mitigation

Action	Responsibility	Resources
1. Close off affected areas	Persons in Charge	
2. Relocate employees/operations to other areas that are not affected.	Persons in Charge	
3. Verify if there are electrical outlets or services exposed	Response Coordinator	Various
4. De-energize exposed electrical services when authorized by [Facilities/Support Services Director]	[Assign]	Contact list if contractor is assigned.
5. Assess damage. Contact restoration contractors as required	Persons in charge and claim coordinators	Contact list
6. Utilize emergency response resources in areas where there is standing water	Response coordinators	Mobile spill cart
7. Prepare the asbestos plans (if applicable) for restoration	Response coordinators	Asbestos plan
8. Contact insurance company to report claim if needed	Claims coordinators	Finance department contact information

It is required that all incidents be reported, even if they fall below the insurance claim deductible, as the finance department may be able to provide valuable advice to mitigate the impact on the business.

**Phase: Restoration**

Action	Responsibility	Resources
1. Prepare the affected area for the arrival of restoration contractors	[Assign]	
2. Enlist and support contractors	Response coordinators	Contact list
3. Make sure to track and report any closed fire protection valves	Response coordinators	
4. Create an inventory of damage (contents, stock, supplies) in affected departments.	Claims coordinator	
5. Identify where salvageable contents can be stored.	Response coordinators	
6. Enlist the services of required restoration		
7. Maintain an ongoing budget of all restoration costs	Claims coordinator	

**Phase: Post restoration**

Action	Responsibility	Resources
1. Ensure adequate restoration	Persons in charge	
2. Return to normal operations	Persons in charge	
3. Total all costs for restoration	Claims coordinator	Insurance information
4. Close out insurance claims	Claims coordinator	Insurance company contact information
5. Debrief all key personnel.	Persons in charge	
6. Review all areas of responses and update where necessary.	Response coordinator	

**Contact Details**

Organization	Contact person	Phone number
[Insert all parties that would need to be contacted in case of a water emergency]	[Identify party]	
Emergency Services	Police, Fire, EMS	911
Insurance company	[Identify party]	
Restoration contractor	[Identify party]	
Plumbing contractor	[Identify party]	

**Updating the Plan**

One of the most important actions that will be taken following a water incident is the evaluation and updating of our water damage prevention plan. This is because water incidents can be different, and each situation offers an opportunity to learn from the response mistakes, improving the response for future incidents. When evaluating our water damage prevention plan, the following will be reviewed:

- What went well
- What went poorly
- What water mitigations worked best
- What training needs to be completed going forward
- Follow-up actions
- Available metrics
- Relationships with service professionals for gaps

# CHECKLIST | WATER DAMAGE PREVENTION

Presented by: Venbrook Insurance Services

Water damage can stem from various sources and cause impacted organizations and their properties to incur significant losses, including destroyed equipment and inventory, prolonged business disruptions, and—in severe cases—structural ruin. Therefore, it's vital for organizations to have effective protocols in place to help minimize the likelihood of water damage affecting their assets and operations. The following checklist outlines key water damage prevention measures for organizations to keep in mind.

## EXTERIOR PROPERTY CONSIDERATIONS

ROOFING, SIDING AND DOORS/WINDOWS	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Is the property's roof routinely inspected and kept in good condition? Have any signs of damage or wear and tear (e.g., punctured flashing, blistered or missing shingles, loose nails and uplifted or sagging materials) been repaired as needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are all roof vents operating correctly and properly sealed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are all roof-mounted components (e.g., HVAC systems) equipped with weather-resistant devices (e.g., hail guards)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are all gutters kept in good condition, cleaned regularly and effectively guarded? Have any signs of damage or debris buildup (e.g., sticks, branches, dirt or leaves) been addressed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the property's siding routinely assessed for signs of damage or wear and tear (e.g., chipping, warping or cracking)? Have these issues been fixed when necessary?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are all doors, windows and skylights fully sealed and weather-tight? Are these features monitored for possible damage and repaired as needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are all window wells properly maintained and protected with grates or covers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

DRAINAGE AND GRADING	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Are all exterior drains located on or near the property kept clear and free of overgrown vegetation or excess debris? Is the property equipped with automatic backflow or backwater valves?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the property landscaped and graded to promote proper drainage, minimize pooling water and direct moisture away from the foundation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Are all downspouts regularly inspected and kept in good condition? Have any signs of damage or wear and tear (e.g., holes or dents) been addressed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do downspouts effectively disperse rainwater, ice and snow away from the property? Have downspouts been equipped with above- or below-ground extension systems as needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

### INTERIOR PROPERTY CONSIDERATIONS

SYSTEMS AND PLUMBING FEATURES	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Have wall, ceiling and floor cracks been sealed? Have any signs of water seepage (e.g., staining or discoloration) been addressed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are pipes monitored for signs of corrosion, rust or leaks and repaired when necessary? Have clay pipes been replaced with metal or PVC pipes as needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are property temperatures kept above 50 degrees Fahrenheit at all times to prevent frozen or burst pipes? Are pipes located in areas that may be exposed to cold air (e.g., attics and basements) properly insulated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are all toilets and sinks routinely inspected to ensure they are functioning correctly? Do water supply valves close smoothly, and are water supply lines clearly attached?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are the sump pump and interior drains in good condition and kept clear of excess debris?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are all fire suppression and sprinkler systems well maintained and inspected annually by a qualified professional?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Does a licensed plumber assess the property's water heater and flush sediment from the tank on a yearly basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are HVAC systems inspected regularly and maintained to prevent condensation or leaks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
VALUABLE ITEMS AND OPERATIONS	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Has critical equipment and infrastructure (e.g., production line machinery, electrical systems and IT assets) been identified and placed on upper floors in areas that are less vulnerable to water damage (i.e., away from windows, doors, pipes and drains)? Are	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

vital operations and processes also conducted in these protected locations?			
Are barriers, curbs or pipe channels installed to redirect potential water flow in instances where vital equipment and infrastructure cannot be placed on upper floors or in less vulnerable areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are sensitive records and materials (e.g., essential files and inventory) stored on upper floors in waterproof containers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are elevators programmed to remain on upper floors when not in use (if applicable)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

WATER DETECTION MEASURES AND BACKUP SYSTEMS	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Is the property equipped with effective water detection features (e.g., liquid level sensors or alarms and remote monitoring technology)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is water damage addressed in the property's emergency response and business continuity plans?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are employees trained on how to handle water damage, continue operations and minimize associated losses (e.g., shutting off water valves and protecting valuable items)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are backup systems (e.g., emergency generators, circuits and batteries) readily available on-site in the event that water damage disrupts the property's essential utilities or operations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

ADDITIONAL WATER DAMAGE PREPAREDNESS MEASURES	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Is there a water response cart readily available with essential tools for emergency water leak response?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a detailed map of all water and liquid systems within the building, with labeled water shut-off control valves for easy access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a maintenance scheduled to exercise and lubricate valves annually?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are emergency supplies to respond to a water incident maintained and ready to use at a moment's notice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Contact us today for additional risk management guidance.

This checklist is merely a guideline. It is neither meant to be exhaustive nor meant to be construed as legal advice. It does not address all potential compliance issues with federal, state or local standards. Consult your licensed commercial property and casualty representative at Venbrook Insurance Services or legal counsel to address possible compliance requirements. © 2023 Zywave, Inc. All rights reserved.