

Preparing Your Business for a Hurricane

KNOWING HOW to respond when a hurricane is barreling down on your area and knowing how to protect your property are keys to your business's survival and ongoing viability.

If your business is in a hurricane-prone area, you need to harden your property against storms and have a plan to continue operating, while protecting your staff and assets. The tips below are a good start to ensuring you can achieve those objectives.

Pre-planning

Planning ahead for a hurricane can save you tens of thousands of dollars (if not more), or even keep your business from going under after an event.

All of your inventory, furnishings, equipment and tools can be destroyed, your employees displaced and your operations can grind to a halt. Here's what you should do in advance of hurricane season:

- Call us to review your property, flood and business interruption insurance. You will want to be sure you are covered for an event well before it happens. Assemble insurance policies, financial records, inventory lists and other important documents. Make duplicates and store in alternate safe places.
- Create a plan for protecting your business property and its contents.
- If necessary, train employees to implement hurricane procedures.
- Determine what emergency equipment and supplies are necessary, (like heavy plastic sheeting, duct tape, sandbags, emergency generator, etc.).
- Designate an individual who will coordinate implementation if a storm strikes.
- Establish plans for protecting computers and files (including making multiple backup files, using a cloud storage solution and moving/storing paper files in a safe location).
- Establish an emergency communication line to be used by employees and their families to obtain status reports and information pertaining to available assistance.

PROTECTING PROPERTY

When a hurricane watch is issued, prepare the exterior of your property by:

- Installing shutters over glass doors and windows or using protective material such as plywood. Make sure that plywood is flush against the wall and tight.
- Bringing inside all loose items that are normally on your property.
- Removing signage.
- Securing all items that cannot be brought inside.
- Securing first-floor doorways with sandbags, air conditioning duct tape or heavy plastic to protect the interior from possible flooding.

For the interior:

- Move merchandise, equipment and furniture from nearby windows and skylights to protect them from water damage.
- Clear all desk and table tops of small loose items.
- Remove pictures and art from walls.
- Disconnect electrical appliances and equipment.
- Box or place any loose papers, books, hanging plants, etc. in desk drawers or storage cabinets.
- Implement the plan to move important documents and files to a safe location.
- Remove contents of lower file-cabinet drawers on the ground floor and secure contents at a higher elevation.
- Cover merchandise, office equipment and furnishings with heavy plastic and secure with duct tape.
- Close and lock all windows; draw the blinds or drapes.
- Turn off the circuit breaker for all electricity, except for refrigeration, and lock all doors when you leave.

Other insurance

While your property and flood insurance may cover the damage, there are other policies that will cover other losses you may sustain:

- **Business income coverage:** This covers net income (net profit or loss before income taxes) that would have been earned or incurred; and continuing normal operating expenses incurred, including payroll.
- **Extended business income:** This coverage extends the "period of restoration" to the time at which business activity has fully recovered.
- **Extra expense:** This covers necessary expenses incurred during repairs, like pick up, rental for new location, etc. ❖

