EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN BEST PRACTICES

Hurricane season is upon us and May brought its share of challenges with the intense thunderstorms that packed high winds, hail, and flooding. Last year's hurricane season was, without a doubt, the most active we have seen in Texas in quite some time, if not ever. For that reason, it may have prompted most of you to re-evaluate your own emergency response plans. There are two different types of response plans each entity should have because they address different exposures. They are a Wind Emergency Response Plan (WERP), which are associated with hurricanes, and a Flood Emergency Response Plan (FERP). FM Global, the Texas Water Conservation Association Risk Management Fund's excess property coverage carrier, provides a variety of resources to help develop efficient emergency response plans. In this article, we will outline best practices for the two different response plans.

Emergency response plans give entities a detailed plan prior to a critical weather event. An effective response plan can greatly reduce damage to property and the impact of business disruption. They provide the advantage of knowing what to do when the weather event happens and ensuring the necessary materials are readily available.

Before developing a plan, identify equipment, vehicles, and processes located in low lying, flood prone areas. Relocating this equipment and/or processes to higher ground can have a significant impact in controlling the losses related to the weather event.

Steps in the emergency response plan take time to be activated and completed. By taking the time to understand the potential event, you can make good use of the warning time you have available, however limited it may be. Studies have shown that facilities with well-organized emergency response plans have nearly 70-percent less damage and resume operations sooner than those without an emergency response plan.

The key, however, does not lie just in the fact of having an emergency response plan. You must take the time to develop it and work out the deficiencies prior to the next weather event. This is accomplished with review and evaluation both annually and after a major

weather event. It is imperative to identify what went right but also what went wrong and what adjustments can be made in the emergency response plan to improve those deficiencies.

Flood Emergency Response Plan (FERP) Best Practices:

- Know the flood levels in your area
  - https://www.fmglobal.com/research-and-resources/nathaz-toolkit/flood-map
  - Identify equipment and vehicles
- Identify and list the emergency response team members in your written plan
  - Designate a person responsible to activate the plan
  - Designate a person to track the storm (it may be the same person)
- Ensure you have a reliable method of flood warning
  - Best source may be the local weather forecast
- Identify locations susceptible to flooding and have a detailed plan to protect buildings, equipment, processes, and vehicles
  - Use permanent FM Global approved barriers to keep water out
  - Use temporary FM Global approved barriers or sandbags to protect water intrusion into specific areas of a building if the entire location is not susceptible to flood
  - Raise key equipment above expected flood levels
    - This may mean relocating vehicles and heavy equipment to higher ground
  - Move portable high value equipment
- Know how long it will take to execute the plan from start to finish
- Realize that the plan may have to be activated in the middle of the night or preparations should be completed before the end of the workday
- Have adequate resources available for clean-up after the storm
- Have a list of utility and contractor contacts with phone numbers in the response plan
- Fill up all vehicles and reserve fuel containers prior to the storm to offset loss of power and access to fuel in the area
- Add a section for employee safety
- Steps, precautions, and resources during preparation and after the storm
- **DO NOT USE CONTRACTORS THAT COME TO YOUR DOOR OFFERING THEIR SERVICE**
  - Do your due diligence and select the right contractor for the job

Wind (Hurricane) Emergency Response Plan (WERP) Best Practices:
A number of these will be similar to the FERP Best Practices but are important to list again

- Identify and list the emergency response team members in your written plan
  - Designate a person responsible to activate the plan
  - Designate a person to track the storm (it may be the same person)
- Ensure you have a reliable method to track the path of the storm
  - Best source may be the local weather forecast
- Identify locations susceptible to flooding and have a detailed plan to protect buildings, equipment, processes and vehicles
  - Use permanent FM Global approved barriers to keep water out
  - Use temporary FM Global approved barriers or sandbags to protect water intrusion into specific areas of a building, if the entire location is not susceptible to flood
  - Raise key equipment above expected flood levels
    - This may mean relocating vehicles and heavy equipment to higher ground
  - Move portable high value equipment
- Ensure the necessary supplies are on-hand
  - Heavy plastic sheeting
  - Duct tape
  - Masking tape
  - Sandbags
  - Emergency generator
  - Sand
  - Chain saw
  - Plywood (1/2” thick)
  - Hand tools
  - Storm shutters
  - 10D nails
  - Screws
  - Straps/Tie downs
- Take and maintain videos or photos of the interior and exterior of buildings.
- Consult with computer back-up company for securement of computer back-up files.
  - **A company should be in place prior to hurricane season.**
- Assemble insurance policies, financial records and other important company documents and place in a fireproof portable safe. Duplicates should be stored in an alternate off-site location.
  - **An off-site location should be identified prior to hurricane season.**
- Arrange for transport of materials to an off-site location.

- Move all remaining records and items away from windows and the floor. Place on table, countertop or on top of file cabinets.
- Cover files and equipment with heavy plastic sheeting.
- Know how long it will take to execute the plan from start to finish.
- Have adequate resources available for clean-up after the storm.
- Have a list of utility and contractor contacts with phone numbers in the response plan.
    - Before the storm
    - During the storm
    - After the storm
- Fill up all vehicles and reserve fuel containers prior to the storm to offset loss of power and access to fuel in the area.
- Generators
    - Run on full load at least once a month
        - Lubricates the moving parts
        - Ensures it will work when you need it to
    - You will need your generator to run essential equipment to maintain business operations, if power is lost for an extended period of time.
- Add a section for employee safety
    - Steps, precautions and resources during preparation and after the storm.
- Arrange to pay employees, preferably in cash, in the event that banking institutions are inoperable.
- Notify local authorities that the building will be vacant, if an alarm system has been activated, or if essential personnel will be staying behind.
- For essential personnel that stays on site:
    - Establish sleeping quarters
    - Ensure enough non-perishable food and bottled water on-hand for at least three days per person.
        - Consider barbecuing for crews, if feasible
    - Ensure enough sanitizing/wet wipes and hand sanitizers are on-hand
        - In case of loss of water supply

Major storm events bring uncertainty and damage. With a plan, we can reduce both and quickly recover after the storm is over. The written emergency response plans are a great tool to communicate the procedures necessary for preparation. The Risk Management Fund Loss Control staff is available for consultation to develop a plan for your facilities. Hurricane season is upon us, so it is imperative to have an updated plan before it is too late.