



# Are You Ready for Winter?

*Precautions you can take for your church this season*

You may be hoping to squeeze in a last round of golf, or a last summer trip, but there's no denying it—winter is on its way! One last thing you should definitely do is check the conditions around your church. It's easier done now than when the snow chills you to the bone and outdoor work is nearly impossible.

To get started, think: Where did water and ice accumulate last year? Where did you sit or pass by that you felt a draft last year? Where are the new water stains? Other than fires, the most common and expensive damage to churches is water. There are various causes, but many can be traced to neglected maintenance.

On the outside, it's all about drainage – if water can't quickly flow away, then it's going to come in. That's why steep roofs are a common tradition in northern climates. Beside the obvious check for loose or missing shingles and secure flashings, drains, gutters and downspouts require inspection.

Blocked gutters cannot drain.

The water logged debris freezes at night, and thaws in the sun. In the repetition of the freeze-thaw cycle, melt water has no place to go and ice continues to build. Icicles form placing a huge load on your gutters.

While the weather is working the outside of your building, on the inside the heat is rising. Lack of insulation, or defects in insulation, will permit heat loss. The smallest gaps in insulation, especially close to exterior walls, act like mini-chimneys. The mark of a well insulated building is heaps of snow on top, but no icicles. No icicles means no ice dams. Snow is melting from the top down, rather than bottom up. Defects in windows, siding and doors can be common culprits as well.



Also of concern is where the water is going. Mainly, for two reasons: (1) protecting the basement from water infiltration; and (2) assuring the safety of your guests. Again, this is a drainage issue. If you have water collecting close to your building at any time of the year, it is a concern. Make the water flow away.

When downspouts get blocked at ground level, they may overflow onto sidewalks. In the winter this will result in repeated freeze and thaw, creating unwanted ice rinks, a hazard for guests. Rather than pursue short term solutions, fix the problem. Be sure drains are clean and can handle the volume of water expected.

Churches are commonly left unoccupied much of the time, leaving them vulnerable to loss of heat and power. In severe winter conditions, various kinds of water damage may follow, the most serious from burst plumbing.

The first preventative step is to insulate pipes that are within or near outside walls or windows.

The next is to augment existing alarm systems to include water detection and central station monitoring. Of course, when an alarm goes off, the breakage has already occurred, but you may be able to control the severity of the loss through early detection.

When you cannot rely on alarm systems, and the weather may be severe or power outages may occur, emergency planning is necessary. Within hours of a reported power outage it is essential to verify whether your church has been affected. Decide who is going to check and then re-check. If the power is out, start moving water through pipes by turning the faucets on to prevent freezing, and establish a schedule for checking until power is back on and functional heating is resumed.

Similar plans must be made in response to serious winter storms. Electricity may be on, but fuel oil can turn to gelatin in extreme cold, and supply lines are prone to moisture accumulation, and can freeze. A door or window blown open can start the process. Someone must regularly inspect the building (s). Nobody wants to deal with the disastrous impact of a loss, but frequent checks can certainly help in damage control.

## Claims Corner

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United Church of Christ Insurance Board	800.437.8830
You May File A Claim On-Line	<a href="http://www.InsuranceBoard.org">www.InsuranceBoard.org</a>

# Do You Know Your Role in a Property Claim?

**By: Alison Hanna**

Do you have a property claim? If so, get that claim reported. Are you not sure if you have a property claim? If so, call Alison Hanna at 800.437.8830, ext. 3250 or visit

[www.InsuranceBoard.org](http://www.InsuranceBoard.org) for instructions or answers to your questions.

Once you have reported a claim, you may want to know what to expect. Here's the process:

- After you report a claim your adjuster contacts you within 24-48 hours (this will be your primary point person)
- The Insurance Board sends you an expectation sheet to help you better understand the process
- The adjuster sets up an appointment to review the damages and will discuss the coverages and give you a task list (keep ALL invoices, bills and receipts)
- The adjuster will communicate to you the status of your claim periodically
- The IB serves as your advocate should you experience any delays or concerns

Now that you know the process, you may want to know what you can do to keep the process moving along. Here's what you can do: contain, document, clean, and repair.

The first action is to contain the damage. If we take, for example, a water leak; the damage can be stopped and contained by shutting off the

water source or stopping the leak temporarily. Just remember when doing this you want to contain the damage to one area. Please remember to use caution when doing so; if containment means putting you or your staff/volunteers in a harmful situation **do not** proceed.

Now that you have contained the area, take photos and keep an inventory of items destroyed or stolen to document the damage. Documenting the loss is important because once you start clean-up you will no longer have a visual record showing proof of the original damage, or of the items destroyed or taken. Documenting your loss is your contractual obligation, and it provides a starting foundation for adjusters.

Done and done. Now to start the clean up. Cleaning is essential because it allows you to review the extent of the damage, eliminate any hazardous conditions, and salvage any property. Just remember if the condition of the property is hazardous, it is best to call the professionals.

Lastly, you are now ready to start the repairs. You are required to take all reasonable steps to protect the property from further damage right away. If emergency and temporary repairs are necessary, keep a record of all expenses. After the adjuster calls you and inspects the damage, s/he will provide instructions about completing the permanent repairs. It is a good idea to find a contractor you trust as soon as possible. Contrary to what most believe, the



adjuster will not require you to use a specific contractor; it is entirely your choice. However, the cost for that contractor must be reasonable in order for the policy to pay the full expense. The adjuster will usually withhold part of the full replacement cost until the repairs are finished. This is to validate the actual cost of the repairs and to ensure the money is properly used to repair what was damaged.

Now that you know your role in a claim, make sure you have an action plan and assigned duties. An action plan will enable you to keep in control, and to make sure nothing is overlooked during a claim.

## News From Our West Coast Office, Carmen & Melissa

We would like to give our formal thanks to our PCUSA membership. Acknowledging that the transition came about rather quickly, your patience and understanding made the whole process a success!

Here in our fourth month, we are feeling the sense of security and stability within the IB program. Our new family has been so welcoming and knowledgeable, as those of you who have spoken with one of them know. It is a huge sigh of relief that we have had such substantial acceptance from the former CPIP program, and our future with the IB its forging ahead as a promising one!



Carmen Siegel, left  
Melissa Donahue, right



The Petaluma (West Coast) office is now the local agency for PCUSA members in the states of CA, OR, WA, ID, AK and NV. If you are not in these states, but are a PCUSA entity, you may contact us if it is after hours Cleveland time (EST), because we are here until 5pm Monday-Friday (PST) ready to assist you. The toll free number is: 866.644.2747.

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Thank you. We look forward to your call!

# Risky Behavior—Your Church May Be Guilty!

The Sep/Oct 2009 issue of *Church Law & Tax Report*, in a lengthy article titled “Church Liability for Sexual Conduct: 13 risks associated with sexual behavior,” defined the risks, in some detail, that open churches to claims.

Your responsibilities as a church leader may put this subject on your plate to consider and “digest”. As a church fiduciary you have an obligation to become knowledgeable and adopt appropriate procedures to protect your church as well as consider whether the insurance limits you carry are realistic.

The risks are:

1. Negligent selection of church workers.
2. Negligent retention of church staff.
3. Negligent supervision of church staff and activities.
4. Negligent supervision of counseling services.
5. Failure to report child abuse as required by statutes.
6. Criminal liability of counselors regarding

sexual contact.

7. Violation of privacy laws while investigating use of computers.
8. Personal liability of church board members in cases of “gross negligence.”
9. Inadequate supervision of known sex offenders attending church.
10. Sexual harassment and tolerance thereof.
11. Improper barring of homosexuals from participation in youth activities.
12. Employment discrimination based on sexual orientation.
13. Same-sex marriages – to wed or not?

Simply knowing the risks is not going to protect your church. Becoming familiar with, and implementing appropriate risk management strategies in these areas is paramount!

You can download the full article on our website [www.InsuranceBoard.org](http://www.InsuranceBoard.org), or email [ckotheimer@InsuranceBoard.org](mailto:ckotheimer@InsuranceBoard.org) for the PDF and information on our free sexual abuse prevention training program.

## Time to Check Your Boiler!

Yes, it’s that time of year! Time to fire up the boiler, the object in the basement which circulates hot water or steam to heat your church. Boilers are commonly used for heating in large buildings. And in some parts of the country, the water is heated with fuel oil rather than natural gas or electricity.

A boiler is not just like your mom’s tea pot. It is a complicated device that heats water to a high temperature and circulates it in your building. It has the potential to explode, causing serious damage and/or injury when not properly maintained. It requires a regular supply of oil or natural gas, water, and electricity. Assuring that a boiler is properly started and operating efficiently is an absolute necessity. And for oil fired boilers, topping off the tank alone is no assurance that oil is flowing to the burner.

Assuming your boiler is actually running, the leading cause of failures is “low water”. It often



starts with a leak, which may be barely noticed. Low water in a boiler is like no oil in an engine. It’s going to break. When your boiler begins to leak or is not receiving enough make-up water, your boiler relies on its “low water shut-off” to shut it down ... if it’s working. When did you last test your boiler’s safety features? Copies of routine boiler inspections that come to our

office (and to you) frequently indicate improper installation of safety valves and other defects that prevent you from inspecting water level.

On our website, [www.InsuranceBoard.org](http://www.InsuranceBoard.org), we have published a **Boiler Start-up Checklist** and **Inspection Log**. Find it in the **Loss Prevention** tab. Make sure you understand these boiler basics. Schedule an inspection with your heating specialist. If your boiler cracks or shuts down and you are not regularly checking your building, you may arrive Sunday to find water, water everywhere!

## New Privacy Breach Coverage for IB Participants

You run a “wired” 21<sup>st</sup> century congregation. No, not wired on coffee, you have office computers, a website, a *Facebook* page and you accept offerings by credit card. What happens when you learn that private information about your congregation has been compromised when one of your computers disappears? It can happen to big retailers ... and it can happen to your church.

Forty-four states now require notification to individuals of an event that may lead to breach of data from your records. Your church may be liable for damages resulting from the security breach.

Good News! The renewal of your Insurance Board program, effective October 1, 2009, contains **Privacy Breach Protection** of **\$25,000** (subject to a \$500 deductible). **No extra charge**. Here’s what you get:

- You are provided liability insurance for damages arising from a wrongful release of private information.
- You are covered for the cost to notify individuals of a release of private information, and the costs to provide credit monitoring and other remediation services when there is a covered incident.

Please be sure you have strong controls on your church computers including good physical security for your offices, and password discipline. Also, be very careful with what information you allow to leave the office for work on home computers. Lock vital records and have off-site back-up routines.

## Oops!

In the Summer issue we mistakenly stated that drivers of 15 passenger vans (including the driver) must have a CDL (Commercial Drivers License). We should have stated that different states have different requirements concerning 15 passenger vans.

You can go to this website to find out what your state requirements are: [www.cdl-course.com/](http://www.cdl-course.com/). Click on the map to view your state requirements.

## Lessons from Losses

In the insurance industry we refer to a client's history of claims as "loss experience." Luckily, to most, there is no "experience" at all, since losses are rare events. As your insurance program manager, we see all of your incidents combined! Some are very expensive, and some very tragic. We thought you should have the benefit of **your** group "experience." The intent of this section is to let you know what we are seeing in the Claims Department, and provide some advice that you can apply in order to avoid having an "experience."

## Prompt Reporting is Golden!

The first thing you hope for when you have an insurance claim is quick service. Especially when you arrive at your church only to find a large tree on top of it.

United Church of Christ of Newport, WA, called Constitution States Services (CSSC) on Wednesday, July 29 to report that their neighbor's spruce tree was laying across their church. The next call went to the church's agent, Dan Antoinette. The church expressed concern that the tree be removed promptly to prevent further damage and to assure that worship could be conducted on Sunday.

Dan's call was to Alison Hanna, Insurance Board Claim Analyst. Dan worked on getting a tree removal contractor for the church, and Alison worked to get an adjuster on scene. An adjuster inspected the site, and the tree was removed the following day.

Most important in this case, Rev. Steve Willis did not wait. He reported the incident immediately with good results.

When reporting **property claims** we recommend calling the Insurance Board first. We are able to enter information directly into the CSSC

system, secure a claim number and expedite serious cases. Or, call your agent as preferred by many IB Participants.



UCC of Newport, WA, July 29th, 2009

## Do You Have an Upcoming Board Meeting?

*Here are some topic ideas for you to consider.*

If you are in a position of leadership and contribute to setting the agenda for your church's management, here are topics you should consider for an upcoming meeting:

- Budgets for maintenance – Agree to a budget for maintenance including contingencies (your deductible). There's always something that needs fixing, and if you ignore it, it usually only gets worse and then more expensive.
- Financial Controls & Audit – Do you have a system of financial controls for your church with a clear separation of duties? When was your last financial audit? (See Winter '09 issue of The Steward for help establishing these controls as well as guidelines on how to start the conversations).

- Safe Church – Abuse Prevention Training – If you have active youth programs there is no excuse for not initiating formal training of youth leaders and volunteers. As an Insurance Board participant, it's free for you! See [www.InsuranceBoard.org](http://www.InsuranceBoard.org) and click on Safe Church Workbench for more information. You also may call Carl Kotheimer for more information at: 800.437.8830, ext. 3244.
- First Aid & CPR/AED Training & AED Investment – The availability of an AED (automated external defibrillator) in the hands of a trained operator is a proven life saver. Evaluate your congregation. Invest in an AED. Assure you have CPR/AED trained volunteers ready to respond. It can make a difference!

The Steward is the joint effort of:

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Loss Control & Claims and  
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Please visit our website  
[www.InsuranceBoard.org](http://www.InsuranceBoard.org) to subscribe to our  
electronic newsletter.



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The Insurance Board is a non-profit property and casualty insurance program serving the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ.