

Planning for Water Emergencies

Loss Control, Water Damage Prevention, 1

If you walk into the church office tomorrow morning and find yourself standing in 3 inches of water, do you know what to do? Does your ministry have a plan for handling water emergencies like a flooded toilet or burst pipe? Water events inside a building can significantly disrupt your ministry. Learn how an effective water emergency preparedness plan can protect your house of worship.

- A basic water emergency plan should contain written guidelines that include conducting initial and annual training for personnel concerning procedures to follow after finding a water leak.
- Your emergency plan should include a map or diagram showing the location of water shutoff valves and exactly how to close the devices.
- Create and implement a loss mitigation plan for employees or volunteers to follow when finding a leak in your church building.
- Maintain a list of emergency contacts, such as a local plumber, roofing contractor, water remediation company, and your insurance agent.
- Make sure you have duplicate (banking, legal and insurance) records in a safe place off-site in addition to having them online.
- Understand the procedures for relocation or movement of goods, records or tenants to a safe area. A written [plan for evacuation](#) of employees, guests and tenants along with equipment shutdown and closing a facility is essential to protect people and property.
- For sensitive areas of a building, make a list of the designated employees who can enter the space.
- Identify lines of authority and personnel assignments.
- List telephone numbers for internal staff and external contacts (water, electric, gas, contractors, equipment suppliers).
- In a water leak emergency, lower levels of any church building without drains will require portable or fixed sump pumps.
- Understand the areas of a property that do not have drainage systems, such as parking garages.
- List, inspect, and maintain any equipment and building utilities.
- Inspect process equipment for proper lubrication in cold weather operation.

Certain tools can help you prevent further damage to your buildings while help (a plumber) is on the way. Consider creating a “water emergency toolkit.”

- **Wrench:** You want to have at least one good pipe wrench, in case you need to make some adjustments to keep a room from flooding. In fact, it's best if you have two—one for gripping and one for turning—and the most practical sizes are a 10" and a 14" model.
- **Plungers:** Chances are you've already got one or two of these, and when used correctly, they can often prevent plumbing disasters. It's best to have one plunger in every bathroom.
- **Plumber's tape:** Also known as "thread seal tape" or "PTFE tape," this is a special tape designed to seal the threads that connect pipe fittings together. You may be able to prevent extensive damage.
- **Gloves:** Gloves do more than keep your hands clean, they also help keep you safe from hot or cold pipes, or cuts/scrapes from jagged pipe threads or fittings.
- **Buckets and rags:** An important part of plumbing work is keeping everything clean. Buckets can help catch overflowing or leaking water, and rags will help you clean up the mess. Pipe threads that are dirty won't seal together properly, which can lead to more problems down the road.
- **Old towels:** If there's a big leak, a few rags aren't going to cut it, so it's good to have some old towels on hand to mop up overflow. And speaking of mopping up, keeping a good mop handy isn't a bad idea, either.

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