

Preparing for hurricanes

Q: The hurricane season is upon us again. How can my business prepare?

A: You will need to have two plans in place: a disaster preparedness plan and a business continuity plan.

Q: What should the disaster preparedness plan contain?

A: It should set out how you will help employees be safe before and after a hurricane. Also, check that your insurance policies are current and provide enough protection for your physical property and assets against any loss or damage caused by a hurricane. Consider how you will protect your property and assets from physical loss or damage.

Q: Any tips for protecting my property?

A: You can use shutters to protect windows and doors to the building. Place items that could be damaged by water and wind, such as computers and telephones, in plastic bags and then on the top of desks. Back up your computer system and keep the back-ups away from the premises in a safe place, ideally in an off-island site where the hurricane is not likely to strike. Place all files and important documents in filing cabinets to limit any rain damage.

Q: What about the business continuity plan? What does that look like?

A: First, check that you have up-to-date business interruption insurance to allow for any loss of business during the recovery period. Then consider whether you have the financial resources to continue if business drops substantially after the hurricane. Work out how you will help any employees return to work as soon as practicable after a hurricane, e.g. with transportation, accommodation, etc. Train your staff in preparing for a hurricane so that everyone knows what is expected of them.

Q: Is that all?

A: You will also need to consider other issues such as staffing, morale and levels of stress. Will you need work permits for claims adjusters who will need to come to the territory and for other temporary employees? Might you be able to work from another jurisdiction? As electricity may be interrupted and computers may not work, have you got back-up ways of communicating? Can you get a generator to produce your own electricity?

Q: That's enough about business. What can individuals do to prepare?

A: Property owners should check they have the right insurance. Does it cover the replacement value of their home, car or other personal property? Avoid getting a shock after the hurricane because your property is under-insured or not insured at all late – check with your agent or broker now.

Q: What about some practical tips?

A: Here are some good ideas:

- Remove any debris around your property as it could hurt you or your property or your neighbour's property if a hurricane hits. Loose objects become projectiles in the wind.

- Have shutters installed on your home or other buildings to prevent injury or damage in the event of a hurricane. Remember – most insurers will give you a discount if you have approved shutters installed.
- Wrap items that may be damaged by water in plastic.
- Stock up on non-perishable items such as canned foods and drinking water. You may not be able to buy them right after a hurricane as stores may be damaged or will be impassable.
- If you have a generator, make sure it is fuelled up and ready.
- Have some cash on hand for emergency purchases before and after.
- Pay special attention to announcements on the radio and television about a storm or hurricane on its way.

Q: And on the day itself?

A: Remember, your own personal safety and the safety of others always comes first. Do not venture out until you are absolutely sure it is safe to do so.

Q: What happens if my property gets damaged?

A: Report this to your agent or broker as soon as possible. Be prepared to give full details of your loss, including an inventory of the damaged or lost items.

Q; I'd better get planning!

A: The way to go. And remember that, while we are not an emergency service, the Financial Services Commission is always willing to assist with matters relating to regulated entities. You can contact us on 494 1324 or email us at

info@moneymatters.org

Stanley A. Dawson, Acting Director of Insurance