



Tabletop Exercise #3

After Hours Property Damage

CSDSIP Tabletop Exercise Series | June 2021

Working in K-12 schools can bring with it a bevy of challenges. Effective emergency planning can help your team operate efficiently no matter what happens throughout the year. Tabletop exercises help you ensure healthy operations by bringing together key stakeholders to test your emergency management plans. CSDSIP is back with another scenario-based tabletop exercise based on real life incidents to test your school's emergency response skills. Each exercise is intended to improve your team's critical thinking abilities in realistic scenarios, help coordinate the right people to assist in an emergency and provide knowledge and tools to build confidence handling emergency scenarios.

Tabletop Exercise 3

Unexpected spring storm causes property damage over the weekend. What do you do?

When: March, Monday Morning

Where: High School

Incident: During a long holiday weekend, storm activity occurred around the state causing blowing snow and freezing temperatures. Staff returned to the building on Monday morning. Custodians noticed some water on the wood gym floor and cleaned up the surface without reporting it.

What was the response? The building was not checked during the storm over the long weekend. Although the custodial staff discovered water on the gym surface on Monday morning and mopped up the water, no further investigation or mitigation was done. Two weeks later a gym teacher noticed the buckling of the floor. The area was sectioned off and reported to administration. The principal contacted the maintenance director to come take a look. After seeing the damage, the maintenance director reported the damage to CSDSIP. An investigation determined that water had migrated through the surface of the gym floor becoming trapped between the vapor barrier and subfloor. Because the trapped water had nowhere to go, it soaked into the wood of the gym floor, causing significant warping. Because of the focus on maximizing fresh air exchange in buildings this year due to COVID-19, dampers controlling fresh air intake on the air handlers were opening more often, including during the winter storm. As a result, several of these dampers froze open allowing snow to blow into the building and cold air to penetrate further into unconditioned spaces. . The snow that blew in melted and leaked on the gym floor, damaging them severely and requiring full replacement.

Critical Thinking:

1. What current policies and procedures are necessary in this scenario?
 - a. Was the response adequate to the magnitude of the incident?
2. Is any individual or department trained on what to do in a similar scenario?
 - a. Would you have involved anyone else?
3. Can an operational change be made to mitigate the damage in the future?
4. What lessons can be learned from this scenario?
5. Are the right employees adequately trained on the use, operation, and functions of building systems?

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Recommendations

After Hours Property Protection Exercise

Recommendation:

“Smart” technology has become more prevalent in school buildings, and especially in HVAC systems. When placed in occupied mode, these systems call for more fresh air intake, allowing cold air and snow to blow into the building systems. The lack of running water on holidays and weekends makes it more likely for pipes to freeze and the lack of occupation can also cause the ambient air temperature can drop even further due to lack of body heat in the building from human presence and movement, magnifying cold air’s impact. During periods of non-use such as weekends and holidays, systems should be set in the unoccupied state as directed by the manufacturers’ recommendations. This will typically result in the system operating within parameters designed to protect the integrity of the building’s environment, but without additional measures that are intended for the benefit of the building’s occupants when in use. Upon discovery of water on the floor, CSDSIP should be immediately contacted, especially on expensive and easily damaged surfaces such as gym floors. Gym floors easily trap water between the vapor barrier and the subfloor without a way for the water to quickly evaporate. Instead, water migrates under the floor, and a relatively small amount of water can turn into a large claim. CSDSIP will engage professionals to check for moisture content in the wood and have drying equipment placed, as necessary, in a timely manner.

In addition to understanding and following the recommended settings for your building’s system, ensure you have a weather watch procedure in place to track severe weather events and have a plan in place to monitor facilities. If a storm is coming, take steps to help minimize weather related building damage by planning in advance and safely checking in on buildings.

Before the storm:

- Check rooftop flashings and penetrations to ensure tight, leak-free seals.
- Check exterior window caulking and seals to ensure leak-free seals.
- Clear leaves and other obstructions from gutters, scuppers and down spouts.
- Clear all surface drains and runoff channels of leaves and other obstructions.
- Check all grade-level exterior door thresholds to ensure that rubber seals are in good condition.

During the storm:

- A building manager, facility director or maintenance staff should complete daily scheduled inspections to the building. Inspections prevent late discovery disasters.
- Monitor and maintain building temperatures no lower than 58-60 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - Ensure the building’s heating systems and insulation maintain internal temperatures no lower than 45 degrees Fahrenheit in areas where there are waterlines and equipment.

After storm:

- Do a thorough inspection of the buildings to look for leaks or water intrusions.
- Call CSDSIP immediately upon discovery of any leaks or intrusions.

Resources

After Hours Property Protection Exercise

Resources:

[Protecting Unoccupied Buildings](#) (CSDSIP Risk Bulletin)

[Winter Weather Property Protection](#) (CSDSIP Risk Bulletin)

[Winter Freeze Checklist](#) (CSDISP Risk Bulletin)

Conclusion:

Winter and Spring storms are commonplace in Colorado and can bring about damage. Having an effective plan in place can drastically change the outcome of a situation. Please reach out to CSDSIP to talk through this tabletop exercise or to answer any questions that may arise out of the completing this exercise.

Join us next time for another tabletop exercise.