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WINDSTORM RESPONSE PLANNING PROPERTY RISK SOLUTIONS TECHNICAL GUIDE

The UK and Continental Europe is fortunate in that it does not generally suffer from the severe low pressure systems that result in cyclones and typhoons in the South and West Pacific, or Hurricanes in the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico and US Eastern Seaboard. This being the case, there are areas of the region and certain times of year when severe windstorms occur, causing damage to buildings, equipment and infrastructure and severe disruption to individuals, businesses and the wider community.

We obviously cannot do anything to prevent the onset of these events but there are steps that you and your business/organisation can take to prevent, or at least minimise windstorm related damage and disruption.

As is nearly always the case, the key to effective action and outcomes is pre-planning and implementing the plan in a timely and effective manner. Put simply, this is knowing 'who, what and when'. It may seem that a windstorm response plan is something that doesn't really apply to you, but to put this in context; in certain parts of the country your chances of being exposed to severe and damaging winds are much greater than your chances of experiencing a significant fire, yet fire emergency response plans are readily accepted as necessary.

A windstorm response plan does not have to be complicated, although it should be comprehensive. In nearly all cases, you will have the relevant expertise and skills to achieve it within your organisation; this is much more about organising and coordinating your resources in an effective manner. Its implementation can be phased and does not need to disrupt operations until necessary.



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6666/FloodEmergencyResponsePlan/JUNE2016
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Key elements of the plan

- Identify a windstorm emergency action team and emergency team leader: These are members of staff who have sufficient knowledge of the site and its operations and the required training to be capable of carrying out necessary actions and making decisions. Part of your plan should consider whether these individuals will be on site or able to access the site in adverse conditions, be realistic in your expectations.
- Establish trigger points at which the windstorm plan will be instigated in terms of the proximity of the event.
- Determine at what stage responsibility/authority for the site and operations will be passed over to the emergency team leader. This should be clearly communicated to all other levels of management and supervision to allow proper implementation of the plan.
- Explicitly document within the plan, the actions you will take and at what time/stage. This may seem pedantic but situations can change rapidly and stressful conditions are not the right time to be making critical decisions. The checklist below is an example of things to consider but in broader terms this can be summarised as:

Inspect

Roofs, gutters, doors, windows, yard areas, outside equipment etc

Correct

Carry out emergency maintenance/corrective actions resulting from the inspections

Protect

Relocate or protect external equipment or storage

Secure

Equipment that will be exposed, don't forget roof mounted equipment

Shut Down

Plant, equipment and processes that may create hazardous conditions if damaged or damage could be exacerbated if left operational

- Where operational managers are required to implement parts of the plan, ensure they have 'check listed' actions and that they confirm these have been completed with the action plan team leader. Most plans will need sequential actions to be effective and if steps are missed, this may compromise the outcome.
- Stick to the plan. It is not possible to predict every eventuality but the decisions made when you had time to think them through are likely to be better than the ones made in an emergency.

Windstorm Response Planning checklist

PRIOR TO WINDSTORM SEASON EACH YEAR

The majority of the elements below should form part of a wider site maintenance and inspection routine.

	Date to be completed by	Done
Carry out routine inspection and maintenance of roofs, paying particular attention to securement and flashing/edge protection.	/ /	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure roof mounted equipment (air handling units, odour abatement equipment, roof vents etc) is properly secured.	/ /	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inspect and maintain guttering and down pipes or other roof drainage systems..	/ /	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure any exposing trees are in good condition and where necessary cut back or remove to prevent damage to buildings or equipment	/ /	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check surface water drains are clear and functioning, and that any culverts or other open drains are clear and properly dredged.	/ /	<input type="checkbox"/>

ON NOTIFICATION OF WINDSTORM THREAT

	Time needed	Done
Assign someone to monitor the progress and intensity of the windstorm and acts as liaison/control.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Carry out visual inspection of roofs, gutters and drainage systems and where necessary make emergency repairs.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Check condition of external doors, windows, shutters etc and make emergency repairs.		<input type="checkbox"/>
If you have identified the need to shut down any equipment or processes as part of your emergency plan then start preparing for this.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Inspect emergency equipment identified as critical in your emergency plan. (generators, pumps, comms equipment etc).		<input type="checkbox"/>

AS THE WINDSTORM BECOMES IMMINENT

At this stage, implement actions specifically identified as part of your emergency plan.

	Time needed	Done
Shut down any equipment or processes previously identified as necessary.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Check yards and surrounding areas for loose debris that may cause damage.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Relocate susceptible outdoor equipment to a safe indoor location.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce yard storage heights.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide additional securement of roof-mounted equipment.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Anchor/secure portable buildings or temporary structures.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Anchor/secure other yard equipment/storage or move to sheltered area.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Carry out power or any other services shut downs as previously identified.		<input type="checkbox"/>

DURING THE WINDSTORM - IF SAFE TO DO SO

Any actions during the windstorm should only be undertaken if safe to do so.

	Time needed	Done
Carry out routine external patrols to identify any damage to buildings or equipment and to monitor general conditions.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Patrol internal areas to identify water ingress or other damage.		<input type="checkbox"/>
In the event of power failure, isolate any equipment that may automatically restart.		<input type="checkbox"/>

AFTER THE WINDSTORM

	Time needed	Done
Designate personnel to inspect the site for its general safety to be re-occupied (live electrical equipment, damaged/leaking piping, unsafe structures or equipment etc) and coordinate 'make safe' activities.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Inspect the site for general damage.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Coordinate necessary repairs with previously identified suppliers/contractors. *Note that while these repairs may be urgent, they should still be controlled using the sites identified safe systems of work (contractor induction, hot work and other permit to work etc).		<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear roofs/gutters and other drainage systems of debris, leaves and other potential blockages.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Prior to re-starting equipment or processes ensure all safety or protective systems (including fire protection/detection) are operational.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure any 'temporary fixes' have been properly assessed and approved by appropriately qualified senior management prior to being implemented.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain a register of 'temporary fixes' with identified priority and timescales for permanent remediation. Senior management should review this at least weekly.		<input type="checkbox"/>