

Preparing for summer storms

Are you prepared for a break in the weather?

While there will be much to enjoy during the long summer days ahead, the hot and humid conditions raise the likelihood that when it rains, it will be in short, sharp bursts with little or no warning.

Weather forecasting has improved significantly in the last few years, although there is still little warning of precisely when and where localised severe weather and cloudbursts occur.

Our roofs and drainage systems are generally designed to cope with most extremes of weather but only if they are in good condition and can work as they are meant to. It is not always obvious that these systems are becoming overtaxed until it is too late. Emergency action / intervention at this stage usually has limited impact.

The consequences of water entering your building are, at best, extremely inconvenient and in the worst cases, disastrous in terms of damage to stock, equipment, fixtures and fittings and general contamination.

Taking the time now to carry out some basic checks and maintenance can significantly reduce the chances of a damaging loss and the checklist below suggests some areas for you to consider.

Think of the consequences

In certain cases, the rainfall rate simply exceeds the capabilities of the drainage systems and despite your best efforts, water may enter buildings. Thinking in advance about how this will affect you and taking some sensible precautions may save considerable inconvenience, disruption and money should the worst occur.

- > Don't store stock directly on the floor. Even raising it 100mm can make all the difference.
- > If you can avoid storing directly under valley gutters, then do so. If not, then try and store lower value, less vulnerable goods in these areas.
- > Electrical, electronic and other sensitive equipment may be directly under potential water entry points. In the short term, think how you may protect it, longer term ask yourself if this is the correct location for it.
- > Think about cellars, basements, trenches, pits, loading docks and other low-lying areas. After an extended dry period, water run off paths may be significantly different from the usual routes. If you have had any incidence of water ingress before then be prepared with sandbags or possibly Floodsax.
- > Check that normal surface water drains and other flow routes are unobstructed.

You can minimise the impact of severe rainfall and cloudbursts by some well timed checks and appropriate maintenance.

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Check list

Check

Roof Condition

- > Remove roof debris.
- > Check condition of sheeting and flashing.
- > Look for shrinkage of sealants (also around roof mounted equipment).

Guttering and Roof Drainage

- > Are debris strainers clear and properly fixed.
- > Are downpipes clear of blockage.
- > Are gutters in good condition, free from debris and pitched to fall to roof drains.
- > Where downpipes are open ended, are the discharge points clear of debris and will the water flow to a safe place.
- > Where installed, are roof scuppers clear.
- > In the case of end draining valley gutters ensure the scuppers are low enough to allow water to overflow before backing up under the roof sheeting.
- > Are scuppers properly sized to take the overflow. They should be no smaller than the drain they are protecting and ideally as large as possible.
- > Have any modifications to the roof accounted for drainage changes, particularly think of facades and parapets that may cause water to accumulate.
- > Do scuppers and overflows discharge to a safe location.

Surface Water Drainage

- > Are surface water drains clear and free of debris.
- > Are other natural drains clear and free of debris - check covered drainage paths.
- > Are vulnerable areas and potential water entry points to buildings provided with sandbags or other prevention methods.
- > If surface drains are overwhelmed, will water flow to a safe location.

QBE European Operations

30 Fenchurch Street
London EC3M 3BD
tel +44 (0)20 7105 4000
QBEurope.com



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