

Winter Weather Precautions for Your Business

Arctic air is moving back into our area soon bringing with it temperatures even colder than those we saw earlier this week. These severe winter weather conditions create a variety of concerns for businesses in Renton. One major concern we have is for those businesses with fire protection systems/sprinkler systems.

As with other equipment, fire protection equipment—from water mains, to extinguishers, to hydrants—can be highly vulnerable to drops in temperature during a severe weather situation. It is important to verify that all fire protection equipment is operating effectively. Please find below a few winter weather precautions that can help to mitigate possible weather related impacts on your operations and maintain business continuity.

Fire Protection Equipment

- Maintain proper heat above 40 F (5 C) for wet pipe systems, dry-pipe valve, deluge-valve and pump enclosures.
- Maintain air pressure within normal range.
- Keep outdoor sprinkler valves clear of snow.
- Check the water temperature of the fire pump's suction tank daily, if provided.
- Tank vents should be kept clear of ice.

Buildings and Structures

The best way to prevent frozen pipes that can lead to costly water damage is to maintain an indoor temperature above 40 F (5 C). Other precautions include:

- Circulating indoor air so temperatures near outer walls do not drop.
- Maintain temperature at approximately 40 F (5 C) at the location of fire alarm control panels.
- Check indoor temperatures regularly, or install building temperature supervision alarms.
- Monitor snow, ice, and water accumulations on rooftops (especially those vulnerable to snow drifting), and remove excessive accumulations if safe to do so.
- Keep roof drains clear of ice and snow, and clear paths to the drains.

Equipment

- For idle air conditioning systems, remove water from oil coolers and water jackets, and drain condensers of chilling units.
- Check pressure vessel vents, relief valves, and safety valves to assure that moving parts are protected from water accumulation or freezing of vapor.

Additional Winter Weather Considerations - Employee Awareness

Whenever snow begins to fall and the temperature drops it is a good time to revisit your emergency plans with your staff.

- Remind employees to carry emergency supplies such as a blanket, shovel, flashlight, and jumper cables in their vehicles in case they become stranded during a storm.
- Ensure backup communications are in place in the event of a loss to normal communications systems.
- Ensure emergency power supply is readily available and in service.
- Keep battery-operated and weather-alert radios in constantly attended locations for monitoring weather reports.
- Maintain adequate fuel supplies for building heat and emergency generators.
- Make arrangements for food and sleeping accommodations in the event your staff must stay on-site during severe weather.
- List emergency phone numbers in your emergency plan, and post the list at all telephones. Ensure that all employees have these emergency phone numbers at home or somewhere off-site.