



TEXAS APARTMENT ASSOCIATION

Disaster Preparedness Guide

TAA's Disaster Preparedness Guide

It may not be possible to always know when a disaster may strike, but you can be prepared.

This guide provides tools for responding to some of the most common natural and man-made disasters and emergencies, including:

- Fire
- Floods
- Hurricanes
- Tornadoes
- Winter storms
- Explosions
- Meth labs
- Violence in the workplace
- Terrorism
- Handling a death onsite; and
- Chemical releases

New employees are encouraged to review this guide as soon as practical after starting. Companies may also want to consider reviewing these policies with all associates at regular safety meetings. Many companies find it useful to conduct safety meetings every six months.

At most companies, onsite managers will be responsible for updating community-specific information in this guide, such as emergency contact information and gathering places in case of evacuation. We encourage companies to customize this guide for their specific needs.

For additional resources beyond what has been provided in this guide, visit:

- www.ready.gov - *Ready* is a national public service advertising (PSA) campaign designed to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to emergencies including natural and man-made disasters.
- www.taa.org/member/industry/disaster-awareness - The disaster awareness section of TAA's website includes links to a number of resources to help you prepare for and recover from disasters.
- www.naahq.org/learn/prepare-for-emergencies-and-disasters - The National Apartment Association's Emergency & Disaster Library includes documents and resources to help members plan for natural disasters and other emergencies. The library includes sample policies, best practices and business assessment and planning tools and has been divided into specific weather-related documents, general disaster planning and disaster recovery.
- www.safeinmyplace.org - Safe in My Place is a project designed and hosted by the Houston Apartment Association to provide disaster resources and information on safety for residents. This project focuses on fire, heat and water safety and hurricane resources.

The ideas in this guide should help your apartment community be prepared for the quickest possible response when a disaster or emergency occurs, although following the steps described here may be above and beyond industry custom and standards.

It is difficult to say what is "customary" or "standard" in the apartment industry regarding disaster and emergency preparedness and response, and TAA's general counsel is not an expert on these subjects. Experts can and will disagree over the ideas expressed in this guide.

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Communication

Effective, time-sensitive communication is imperative before, during and after disasters and emergencies. Properties should maintain an emergency contact list and provide all employees with the information. In the event of an incident, the first employee on the scene must make contact with someone in a supervisory capacity after contacting authorities (if needed) or taking other steps to deal with the emergency at hand. If you don't immediately reach a supervisor, keep trying.

In any communications it is important to be very specific about the incident so that exaggerations aren't intensified as they are communicated. Also be sure to stick with facts and not speculate.

Communicating with employees

In emergency situations, it is important that all employees are accounted for and that they understand the critical role they play in controlling the flow of information.

A contact list should have each employee's cell phone number, email address and an emergency contact. Properties may want to consider having a "call tree" so all employees can be located and notified quickly. In some cases, such as a natural disaster, cell phone service may be disrupted and it may be easier to communicate via email. Messages relayed to employees should be clear and concise to ensure consistent delivery.

Events may be evolving quickly and all employees may not have the latest information on the situation. It is critical that employees should not give out incomplete or outdated information to residents or the media. When approached for information, it is advisable to tell the person making the inquiry that information will be distributed as available.

Communicating with residents

In the event of a disaster or emergency on the property, you should consider communicating with residents to let them know what happened. Disasters and emergencies onsite often end up on the news, and residents should hear about the situation from you first.

Once a decision has been made to notify residents about the situation, get proper approval before any communications are provided to residents. Any oral statements should be prepared and letters should inform residents of the incident or pending situation. Some aspects to consider are assuring residents that every effort is being taken to handle the situation and keep them informed. If a letter is distributed, keep a file copy and note the date, time and method of delivery along with the name of the person who delivered it. A good source of templates for letters is the TAA REDBOOK and REDBOOK Online, which contain samples of resident communications for many common situations. Though it's not common in the rental housing industry as of the writing of this publication, communication during disasters and emergencies is happening more often via text messaging. The next time you revise your disaster and emergency communication policies, you might want to consider texting as an option.

Also, remember to keep the answering service informed about the status of the disaster or emergency. Provide them with clear, specific instructions about how to respond to inquiries about the situation.

Provide ongoing information for your residents and the answering service about the status of any repairs, and always make sure to follow your company's policy regarding approval of the communications before distribution.

Communicating with the media

Most companies have a detailed policy about who is authorized to communicate with the media. Make sure you know and follow your company's policy. If your company does not have a policy for communicating with the media, consider creating one.

If members of the media show up on property during a disaster or emergency, you have the right to ask them to stay off of the property. However, they may take any photographs or attempt to interview residents while outside the property boundaries. If the media is allowed onsite, assemble them in an area that will not obstruct emergency personnel or other authorities who are investigating the incident. If you have to ask them to stay off the property, say something like the following: "Our first concern is for the safety and security of our residents. We need you to please stay clear of our property so that the authorities can handle this situation."

If your company's policy does not authorize you to speak with the media, let the reporter know that you are forwarding the inquiry to the designated spokesperson. Get the reporter's name and contact information, as well as the name of the media outlet so that your company's spokesperson can respond to the inquiry. Never say "no comment," and do not speculate or speak with reporters "off the record". Saying "no comment" may look like you have something to hide and reporters have no obligation to not report something just because someone suggests that it is off the record or confidential.

Emergency Contact List Template

Fill in the appropriate phone numbers on this template to make sure you can get in touch with all necessary personnel during a disaster or emergency.

Onsite Employees

Name	Role	Cell Phone	Email	Emergency Contact Name	Emergency Contact Phone

Corporate Contacts

Name	Role	Main Phone	Cell Phone	Email

Emergency Services – Always call 911 for emergencies

Organization	Contact	Phone	Description
Police Department			Non-emergency line
Police Department			Community Resource Officer
Fire Department			Non-emergency line

Utility Company Contacts

Company	Contact	Main Phone	Cell Phone	Email	Description
					Electric
					Gas
					Phone
					Cable
					Water

Vendor Contacts

Company	Contact	Main Phone	Cell Phone	Email	Description
					Legal Counsel
					Carpet
					Plumber
					HVAC
					Gates
					Alarm company
					Roofing
					Towing
					General contractor
					Chemical supply

General procedures that apply to all emergencies

Know your company's designated point person during a disaster or emergency.

- The first employee who arrives at the scene should call 911, if necessary. The employee should then contact the onsite manager or other company designated contact who will provide additional instruction.
- Make sure the answering service, your website and voicemail greeting are updated with important emergency instructions and information for residents.
- Clearly communicate tasks with all onsite employees to ensure adequate staffing.
- If residents are unable to occupy their apartments following a disaster, work with them to secure interim housing, preferably at the community. Remember, the property is under no obligation to pay for interim housing. Encourage residents to stay with friends or family. Your property supervisor will need to give approval before commitments are made for the residents who are asking for hotel accommodations at the property's expense.

Following these best practices may help you respond and recover more quickly in the event of a disaster or emergency:

- Keep an inventory of all office and shop furniture, equipment, computers, owned copiers, fax machines, tools, machinery, golf carts and any other equipment on property. Record serial numbers and keep this inventory in a safe location. A copy of this inventory should be kept off-site.
- Take pictures of the equipment noted in the inventory and keep the pictures in a secure location.
- Try to have a set of plans for the physical property showing all locations for mechanical equipment, water and gas shutoffs, main electrical panels, elevators, roof access and standpipes. Keep these plans on hand for emergency service providers.

Suggested supplies

To help prepare for and respond to disasters quickly, always have ample stock of the following supplies:

- Battery-powered radio, flashlight and extra batteries
- Bottled water
- Canned food and can opener
- Carpet fan blowers
- Digital camera
- Extra clothes and blankets
- First aid kit
- Generators
- Hose
- Mops
- Plastic sheeting
- Poster board and markers for signs
- Pumps
- Sandbags
- Sturdy shoes and work gloves
- Tape and rope to cordon off dangerous areas
- Tarpaulins
- Two way radios

Evacuations

In some emergencies, there may be a need for the designated person in charge of the situation to evacuate all or part of the property. The property should have pre-determined nearby areas designated as safety zones where residents and employees can gather, if necessary. If first responders are onsite, the staff should defer to them. If appropriate and safe, employees can go door to door to instruct residents to vacate the affected areas and assemble in the identified common area. Employees should never take action that will endanger their own safety.

In the event that government officials or law enforcement requests a voluntary evacuation in an area that may be affected by a natural disaster, you should seriously consider complying with the evacuation request after checking with your supervisor or property owner. You do not, however, have the legal authority to force your residents to leave their apartments.

Although you have no legal duty to notify residents about an evacuation request, you certainly may do so. TAA has prepared a sample notice for this purpose (online at www.taa.org/images/assets/PDF/Hurricane%20resources/notice%20to%20community%20residents%20about%20hurricane%20warning.pdf) You may also want to have information available about elderly or disabled residents who may need additional assistance in case of an evacuation and share that information with authorities.

You should follow company policies during the preparation for and reaction to a natural disaster. For example, if your company policy states that employees will be allowed to leave during a voluntary evacuation requested by local officials, then you must allow those employees to evacuate.

In the event of a mandatory evacuation ordered by government authorities, all employees should comply with the order.

Even under a mandatory evacuation, residents may not be forced by the property owner to leave their apartment. However, you may want to advise residents who choose to remain that the staff will be complying with the mandatory evacuation order. You may also choose to notify local authorities about residents whom you know have remained in their apartments despite the evacuation order.

If a law enforcement officer requests emergency access to an apartment to check on a resident who has defied the mandatory evacuation order, you should allow the officer to enter the apartment.

Property management issues after disaster strikes

Even if your property is undamaged following a disaster, issues may arise in assisting people who have been displaced. The questions below address some of those concerns.

Preferential treatment for disaster victims

Is it a fair housing violation to allow greater occupancy levels or give preferential treatment (such as reduced rental rates or free rent) to disaster victims? No. You may allow disaster victims to live in your units for free or for reduced rent and still charge fair market rent to everyone else. You may also waive application fees, administrative fees and charge lower security deposits for disaster victims. However, be sure that any such policies are applied equally to all protected classes.

Disaster victims living as guests of existing residents

If you decide to let disaster victims live in a unit as a guest of an existing resident for free or for minimal extra rent, what legal precautions should you take? You should ask the existing residents to sign a lease addendum so that all issues concerning the occupancy by the evacuees moving in with the resident are clear. TAA has prepared the Lease Addendum Allowing Temporary Increased Occupancy Because of Fire or Natural Disaster to help in those situations. The addendum and the Information Sheet Regarding Disaster Victim Occupants are both available at www.taa.org/member/industry/disaster-awareness and are also available in TAA Forms Online.

Price gouging is illegal!

What is price gouging? Section 17.46 of the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices – Consumer Protection Act provides that it is a false, misleading or deceptive act or practice to take advantage of a disaster declared by the Governor under Chapter 418, Government Code, by: (1) selling or leasing fuel, food, medicine or another necessity at an exorbitant or excessive price; or (2) demanding an exorbitant or excessive price in connection with the sale or lease of fuel, food, medicine or another necessity. While the statute does not precisely define what an “exorbitant or excessive price” may be, common sense dictates that an increase in rent immediately after a disaster is likely to be considered price gouging. To avoid any accusation of price gouging, disaster victims should be charged the same or lesser rent than was charged for a comparable lease term in a comparable unit before the disaster.

Even if you think you are simply following normal company pricing policies, you can be liable for price gouging if the rent you are charging goes up because of a disaster. For example, if you have a pricing sheet that increases the rent as occupancy levels increase, the price increase could be considered price gouging if the increase in occupancy levels is due to a disaster.

Another example of possible price gouging concerns how you handle rent concessions. You may have been offering rent concessions before a natural disaster, but after the disaster because of the higher occupancy rate in your property you may not plan to offer the same rent concessions to disaster evacuees. Because the effect of a rent concession is to lower the effective rate you were charging the existing residents, you may be accused of price gouging if you charge the same rent but don't offer the same concessions previously offered to residents before the disaster.

Amount of rent

May you lawfully charge a higher rent for a month-to-month rental than you charged immediately before the disaster for a long-term rental? Yes. Applicants who have previously been on long-term leases may not understand that month-to-month rental is generally more expensive, so you should be prepared to explain the market realities to the applicant. But a month-to-month rental for a disaster victim cannot be more than you would charge to a person who was not a disaster victim. However, TAA policy has been to urge companies to offer to charge disaster victims the same for a month-to-month lease as they would for a six-month or one-year lease.

Occupancy limits

How many adults may I allow to occupy a bedroom? Section 92.010 of the Texas Property Code requires you to limit the maximum number of adults that you may allow to occupy a dwelling to three times the number of bedrooms in the dwelling, unless the residents meet exceptions required by fair housing laws or a resident is seeking temporary sanctuary from family violence. "Bedroom" means an area of a dwelling intended as sleeping quarters. The term does not include a kitchen, dining room, bathroom, living room, utility room or closet or storage area of a dwelling.

Some cities may place limits on the number of unrelated people who may live in a house.

Fire

Before

The key to quick recovery from a fire is being as prepared in advance as possible. Know the location of all fire exits, firefighting equipment and alarm pulls on property, and know how to properly use fire extinguishers.

In the event of a fire, each employee should have a pre-assigned task, and you should practice those tasks with your team twice a year in fire drills. When new employees start, review their assigned tasks with them. This way, when a fire breaks out, each employee will know what to do without having to wait on the manager for instruction. Do not attempt to fight a fire unless it is very small. Do not endanger your life or the lives of fellow employees or residents.

Have a complete inventory of all office and shop equipment. Every time a piece of equipment is purchased or replaced, update the inventory list. Note serial numbers on the inventory list, and keep a copy of the inventory list off-site.

Fire Prevention Tips

- Always dispose of smoking materials properly.
- Never dispose of flammable items in a trash can.
- Make sure that all fire safety equipment is working and has been properly inspected.
- Enforce restrictions such as bans on burning candles in apartments or having grills on balconies.
- Remind residents about keeping smoke alarms in working order
- Consider educating residents to be mindful of having safe evacuation routes in the event of fire. Visit www.haveanexitstrategy.com for more information.

Report any of the following:

- Fire hazards you find in and around the property. Be aware of hazards such as electrical wiring that is worn or overloaded.
- Faulty equipment that may be making unusual noises or smells “hot.” Materials inside could be overheating and may cause a fire.
- Suspicious activity by any person in or around the property. Some fires are deliberately started.

During

If the fire is contained in a small area such as a waste basket:

- Stay calm and try to extinguish the fire. Remember that fire needs oxygen and without oxygen the fire will go out.
- Only use fire extinguishers on small, contained fires and make sure you use the fire extinguisher properly.
- Inform the onsite manager of the incident. Call the fire department if necessary.
- Watch the area where the fire was extinguished in case the fire is smoldering and ignites again.
- Never use water on a grease fire.

If the fire is too large to safely extinguish, call 911 immediately.

- Give accurate directions to the property and identify the location of the fire. Let emergency personnel know if the fire is near the maintenance shop, boiler room or chemical storage area.
- Assign a staff member to wait at the entrance and direct emergency personnel to the specific fire location.
- Call in all available staff members.
- The maintenance supervisor or a designated member of his team should shut the power off to the affected buildings immediately.

- Follow instruction from emergency personnel to minimize the destruction of the property, enforce crowd control and assist in evacuations, if requested.
- Assuming it is not in the path of the fire, keep a staff member in the leasing office to answer the phone, work with residents and act as a command center.
- If the media arrive, follow your company's policy for media response. If your company doesn't have a policy, refer to the tips for working with the media in this guide.
- Pull keys for all units that are affected by the fire.
- If you can do so safely, check for anyone who is unable to evacuate or may need assistance.

If your building is on fire:

- Go to the closest exit not blocked by fire or smoke. Move quickly but maintain a sense of order. Do not let anyone run, shove others, shout or say anything that may cause unnecessary panic.
- If your community has elevators, do not use them. You may get trapped between floors.
- If you must go through doors to exit, feel the door first to see if it is hot.
 - If the door is cool, proceed to exit and close the door behind you to reduce the oxygen level fueling the fire. Stay low and cover your mouth and nose if possible. Smoke and toxic gases rise. Cleaner air is closer to the floor.
 - If the door is hot, there may be a fire on the other side. Do not open the door. Look for another exit and proceed carefully. If another exit is not available, block any doors or air vents to prevent smoke from entering. Move as far away from the fire as possible and call for help if you have a working phone. Go to the window and attract attention so that you can be rescued.
- After exiting the building, stay clear of the fire fighters and equipment. Immediately go to your designated meeting point.

Remember to notify your property supervisor as quickly as possible.

After

After the fire, immediately inform the residents of the affected buildings who were not at the scene of the fire.

- Prepare a notice approved by your property supervisor to be distributed to all residents. Make residents aware of the fire and the steps you are taking to help affected residents and repair damaged apartments.
- Follow your company's procedures regarding incident reporting.
- If the affected building is structurally safe, remove debris from the area before you allow residents to collect their belongings. Establish a reasonable deadline in which residents can remove their belongings. At the expiration of the deadline, inform in writing any residents who have not removed their property that their property will be considered abandoned if it is not removed. Establish a firm, final deadline for removal.
- Contact the appropriate person within your company for assistance with renovations and securing the affected units.
- If there is significant structural damage, arrange for temporary fencing and lighting around the affected buildings. Put a trash dumpster next to the building. If looting is likely to occur, consider arranging for security guards to patrol the area.
- Unless specifically instructed otherwise, do not allow demolition of the affected units to take place until the insurance company adjuster views the damage.

Floods

Floods can start as a result of problems with your community's water system and from rising water or rain storms.

Floods due to water system problems:

In the event of a flood from the water system, first locate and shut off the main water valves or the valves for the affected areas. Know where the site maps that display the locations of the water cut-offs are located for your property.

Floods due to natural causes:

If natural flooding is predicted, the onsite manager should monitor advisories from the National Weather Service and determine with the property supervisor if conditions warrant an evacuation. Follow the advice of emergency personnel and do not put yourself or your residents in danger.

Important definitions to understand:

- Flash flooding occurs within six hours of the rain event and is due to excessive rain in a short period of time.
- Flooding is a long-term event that may last several days or longer.
- A flood watch means that flooding is possible. The onsite manager should continue to monitor weather reports for more information.
- A flood warning means that flooding is occurring or will occur soon. The onsite manager and property supervisor will make a determination if evacuation is necessary.

Before

- Move as much property and equipment as you can to higher ground. If possible, relocate important files.
- Identify electrical equipment in the likely path of rising floodwaters. Shut off electricity where appropriate to avoid further damage or fire hazard.
- Identify high ground evacuation points for trucks and outdoor equipment.
- Identify drains that may back up under the reverse pressure of floodwater. Clear equipment and supplies from the area.
- Move water reactive chemicals to watertight containers or to higher ground. Secure any toxic or flammable chemicals where they are unlikely to contaminate floodwaters.
- Make sure that back-up systems are fueled.
- Alert all staff members to similarly prepare models, recreational areas, clubrooms, shops and storage areas.
- Distribute notices to each resident and instruct them to move all items from their patios indoors. Also instruct residents to follow the evacuation orders from local authorities. Visit www.taa.org/images/assets/PDF/Hurricane%20resources/notice%20to%20community%20residents%20about%20hurricane%20warning.pdf for a sample resident notice.
- Contact your company's IT department and follow its directions for backing up information.
- Deposit all monies. Petty cash should be secured with the manager.
- Drain about two feet of water from the swimming pool only to prevent the area from flooding. Do not drain the entire pool as that increases the possibility of additional damage to the pool. Store all pool furniture inside.
- Post an emergency phone number on the office door along with resident responsibilities during a storm. If your community communicates with residents via text messaging or email, consider sending the emergency phone number and resident responsibilities via text message or email.
- Check the grounds and put all loose articles in secured storage, including water hoses, trash cans and outside seating.

- Lock down dumpster/compactor doors and the gates surrounding them.
- Before the storm's arrival, open the property gates and disconnect power to the gate system.

During

- Safety is the number one priority. Do not put yourself in danger.
- Monitor the flood damage if you can do so safely.
- Continue to update the property supervisor and chain of command on the situation and damage.

After a flood has occurred

- Inspect the property to assess the impact of the flood and the need for cleanup. Report this to your property supervisor.
- Check communications equipment and back-up systems.
- Keep all fire protection systems in service.
- Return any impaired services, including alarms, to service promptly.
- Rope off dangerous areas. Check for washout areas that might undermine the structural integrity of walls or foundations.
- Keep children and pets away from contaminated areas.
- Make sure that no gas or electrical lines are exposed or damaged. Shut down operations that can be adversely affected by water, including elevators and low-lying electrical equipment.
- Check for spilled flammable liquids and contaminants and clean them up first.
- Remove standing water.
- Remove flood debris carefully.
- Clean and dry equipment.
- Debrief with all personnel to make sure that all information is shared.

When flooding affects residents

- Evacuate residents from the flooded apartments, as it may become necessary to discontinue electrical power to these units. Never use elevators.
- As soon as possible, notify your property supervisor of the situation.
- Resident belongings should be insured through their individual renter's insurance.

Hurricane

Hurricanes pose two primary threats to people and properties

1. Damage or injury due to high winds, and
2. Damage or injury due to storm surges and flooding.

It's important to understand the difference between a hurricane watch and hurricane warning to help you know when to prepare.

- A hurricane watch is an announcement that hurricane conditions (sustained winds of 74 mph or higher) are possible within the specified area. Because hurricane preparedness activities become difficult once winds reach tropical storm force, the hurricane watch is issued 48 hours in advance of the anticipated onset of tropical-storm-force winds.
- A hurricane warning is an announcement that hurricane conditions (sustained winds of 74 mph or higher) are expected somewhere within the specified area. Because hurricane preparedness activities become difficult once winds reach tropical storm force, the hurricane warning is issued 36 hours in advance of the anticipated onset of tropical-storm-force winds.

Before hurricane season

- Remove dead branches from trees. They become injury-causing projectiles during a storm with high winds.
- Know what precautions you need to take in turning off valves if you have natural gas onsite.

When a watch is issued

- Monitor local media for weather conditions and emergency information.
- Inform your property supervisor of the approaching storm.
- Distribute notices to each resident and instruct them to move all items from their patios indoors. Also instruct residents to follow the evacuation orders from local authorities. Visit www.taa.org/images/assets/PDF/Hurricane%20resources/notice%20to%20community%20residents%20about%20hurricane%20warning.pdf for a sample resident notice. Consider texting residents to tell them to look for the notice.
- Contact your company's IT department and follow its directions for backing up information.
- Unplug all electrical equipment in your clubhouse and office. Get all items off the ground, away from windows and covered with plastic wrap or bags. Label all cables so that you can put equipment back together quickly after the storm. Brownouts (low power) wreak havoc on equipment, especially computers. Power surges, particularly after power goes out in an area or building and then comes back on all at once, usually destroys some equipment and/or starts fires when shorts occur.
- Deposit all monies. Petty cash should be secured with the manager.
- Board up office windows.
- Check roof drains to prevent water accumulation, which might weaken the structure.
- Make sure the answering service, your website and voicemail greeting are updated with important emergency instructions and information for residents.
- Drain about two feet of water from the swimming pool only to prevent the area from flooding. Do not drain the entire pool as that increases the possibility of additional damage to the pool. Store all pool furniture inside.
- Move any water-reactive chemicals to watertight containers. Secure any toxic or flammable chemicals where they are unlikely to contaminate any floodwaters.
- Remove flags from flagpoles.
- Post an emergency phone number on the office door along with resident responsibilities during a storm. If your community communicates with residents via text messaging or email, consider sending the emergency phone number and resident responsibilities via text message or email.

- Check the grounds and put all loose articles in secured storage, including water hoses, trash cans and outside seating.
- Lock down dumpster/compactor doors and the gates surrounding them.
- Before the storm's arrival, open the property gates and disconnect power to the gate system.

When a warning is issued

- Your primary concern should be the safety and well-being of you and your family. With that in mind, obey all evacuation orders from local authorities.
- Communicate to your residents when the property management staff will evacuate the property and how they should reach staff after the hurricane.
- Contact the appropriate vendors and make sure that your community is on the priority list for repairs after the storm.
- Disconnect all circuit breakers to the leasing office, pool pumps, fountains and sprinklers.
- Notify the alarm company that power to the facility is being shut down via the main circuit breaker.
- Shut down elevators if your community has them. Post signs on each floor advising residents to use the stairs.

During the hurricane

- Monitor local media for emergency instructions.
- Stay indoors away from doors and windows. Remain indoors until the "all clear" notice has been given by your local authorities.
- Turn off interior electricity. Use flashlights for light. Avoid using candles if possible.

After

Do not assume that the danger has passed because the storm has. As many fatalities occur after the storm as during the storm. Watch for downed power lines, flooded roads and washed-out bridges.

- Address life and safety issues on a priority basis.
- Carefully check damaged apartments for injured residents. Call 911 if anyone has been injured.
- Never plug-in or reconnect equipment that has been damaged by water. If flooding has occurred affecting electrical systems, have a certified electrician check all systems before you switch on any circuit breakers.
- Mixing water and electricity can result in a fire. Regardless of how high you are in a building, water damage can occur when a window breaks. When that water is combined with plugged in extension cords of appliances you run the risk of shorts, which can result in a fire. Move valuable equipment away from window areas but again make sure the power cord is disconnected so that when the power comes back the combination of water and electricity doesn't create a problem which could have been avoided.
- Check with the answering service and courtesy officer for anything that requires immediate attention.
- Keep a log that includes who, what, where and when along with what repairs were done and when.
- Keep a list of all cash outlays for emergency repairs in case these count toward insurance deductibles. Take pictures or video of the damage.
- Inspect the property and record hazards, damage and needed repairs. Inspect dark areas with flashlights, not candles. Complete a loss report.
- Inform your property supervisor about the status of the property after you've inspected the property.
- Check storage areas for chemical spills. Clean the spills according to proper procedures. See the chemical spills checklist in this guide for more details.

- Secure the property from the elements and looters. Cover broken windows with plywood and plastic. If needed, call a fence company and request a temporary fence around the property or buildings to secure the area.
- When time permits, contact all affected residents who were not at home during the hurricane to notify them of the damage and status of when they can access their apartment and belongings.

Tornado

Advance planning and quick response are key to surviving a tornado and limiting damage and injury. Occasionally, tornadoes develop so quickly that little, if any, advance warning is possible. At the beginning of each tornado season, conduct tornado drills and review this procedure.

It's important to understand the difference between a tornado watch and tornado warning so that you know how much time you have to prepare.

- Under a tornado watch, tornadoes are possible. Remain alert for approaching storms. Watch the sky and stay tuned to local media for additional information. The onsite manager should review these procedures with staff and continue to monitor the weather.
- Under a tornado warning, a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately. All staff should move to a safe place and stay there until the warning is lifted.

Tornado warning signs

Besides an obviously visible tornado, look and listen for

- Strong, persistent rotation in the cloud base
- Whirling dust or debris on the ground under a cloud base
- Hail or heavy rain followed by either complete calm or a fast, intense wind shift
- Loud, continuous roar or rumble that doesn't fade in a few seconds like thunder
- Small, bright, blue-green to white flashes at ground level near a thunderstorm, which will indicate that power lines are being snapped by very strong wind
- Persistent lowering from the cloud base, illuminated or silhouetted by lightning – especially if it is on the ground or there is a blue-green-white power flash underneath.

Before

The following preparations may help prevent damage to the property caused by impending high winds and heavy rain.

- Secure outdoor furniture, small signs and trash containers to keep them from blowing away or blowing into windows and cars. If you have enough time, alert residents to clear patios and balconies. Even small items can be dangerous.
- Make sure all common areas and amenity doors are securely closed. Windows may need to be protected with shutters or plywood. Glass areas should be taped in a crisscross fashion.
- Check roof drains to prevent water accumulation, which might weaken the structure.
- If your community has elevators, secure the elevators and waterproof the elevator machine room.
- Turn off and unplug computers, fax and copy machines, televisions and other electrical equipment. Move important records away from windows. Have insurance information and key records in waterproof containers.
- Move any water-reactive chemicals to watertight containers. Secure any toxic or flammable chemicals to where they are unlikely to contaminate any floodwaters.
- Follow instructions from emergency personnel and local authorities. Issue evacuation orders to residents if you're instructed to do so by local authorities.

During

During the tornado, stay inside, and stay away from windows. Avoid being in your car since cars are easily tossed and destroyed during tornadoes.

After

Do not assume that the danger has passed because the storm has. As many fatalities occur after the storm as during the storm. Watch for downed power lines, flooded roads and washed-out bridges.

- Address life and safety issues on a priority basis.
- Stay out of damaged buildings and return only when authorities say it is safe.
- Leave the building if you smell gas or chemical fumes.
- Call your property supervisor to discuss repairing damage to the property. Roof damage from wind can cause more damage from rain and water if not addressed quickly. Contact your roofing company to repair or temporarily cover the damage.
- Never plug-in or reconnect equipment that has been damaged by water. If flooding has occurred affecting any electrical systems, have a certified electrician check all systems before you switch on any circuit breakers.
- Check with the answering service and courtesy officer for anything that requires immediate attention.
- Inspect the property and record hazards, damage and needed repairs. Inspect dark areas with flashlights, not candles. Complete a loss report.
- Update your property supervisor about the status of the property after you've inspected the property.
- Check storage areas for chemical spills. Clean the spills according to proper procedures. See the chemical spills checklist in this guide for more details.

Winter Storms

The onsite manager should monitor storm advisories being issued by the National Weather Service. When a major winter storm warning is issued predicting heavy snow or icy conditions, you may need to close the office early. Consult with your property supervisor to make this determination.

TAA encourages members to adapt this checklist for each property based on the age and type of construction. Suggestions included here are more general in nature.

Before

When freezing weather is expected, onsite staff should:

- Notify your property supervisor.
- Notify all residents as early as possible by posting freeze alert notices in all common areas and entrances to the property. Also put a freeze alert letter on residents' doors. If your community communicates with residents via text messaging or email, consider sending the emergency phone number and resident responsibilities via text message or email.
- Walk all vacancies. Set the heat at 60 degrees, drip all the faucets (hot and cold), and open all closet and cabinet doors. If the apartment has laundry connections on exterior walls, discuss precautionary measures with the property supervisor. Take similar precautions in the office, clubhouse, models and shops.
- Protect the exterior spigots. Install faucet covers.
- Shut down and drain off the lawn sprinkler system. Landscape contractors may assist in completing this task.
- If roadways and driveways are already icy, open the electronic access gates.
- Make sure the pool and spa pumps are working properly. The circulating water may prevent freeze damage during a mild or short freeze.
- Shut off and wrap exterior hose bibs and exposed piping.
- Turn on gutter or eave heat strips.

If freezing weather is severe or extended:

- Shut down the laundry rooms. Lock doors, post signs and drain water lines.
- Re-check vacancies and leave notice in all occupied apartments.
- Throw logs and tires in the pool upon instruction from the property supervisor.
- Spread sand or salt on steps and sidewalks to property offices and amenities. Make sand and salt available to residents to use by their apartments.

During

1. Stay inside during the storm.
2. Walk carefully on snowy or icy walkways if you must be outside.
3. Keep dry. Change wet clothing frequently to prevent a loss of body heat.
4. Drive only if it is absolutely necessary. If you must drive, travel in the day, don't travel alone, keep others informed of your schedule, stay on main roads and avoid back road shortcuts. Let someone know your destination, your route and when you expect to arrive.

When the storm is over

- Check for frozen pipes or leaks
 - Leaks may not become visible until the water is thawed.
 - Carefully use your hand to find the coldest spot and thaw the pipe from the faucet end toward the source. Warm the pipe slowly.
 - Before applying heat to the pipe, open the nearest faucet to relieve the pressure. Never use an open flame to heat the pipe, but also be aware of the danger of electrical shock if using a hair dryer.

- Do not thaw a frozen water meter. Contact the utility company.
- Remove the freeze alert signs.
- Restore the laundry rooms.
- Walk vacancies to adjust the heat, turn off faucets and close doors and cabinets.
- Reactivate the electronic access gates.
- Check your inventory of supplies for the next storm.

If your property has suffered freeze damage:

- Take pictures and note locations of damage on a site plan immediately.
- Take steps to calm and comfort residents. Check on residents who may need assistance, especially the elderly.
- Keep residents informed of any water cut-offs that are necessary for repairs.

Familiarize yourself with these terms to help identify a winter storm hazard:

Source: www.ready.gov

- Freezing rain is rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees and power lines.
- Sleet is rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet also causes moisture on roads to freeze and become slippery.
- Winter weather advisory is when winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous. When caution is used, these situations should not be life threatening.
- Winter storm watch means that a winter storm is possible in your area. Listen to weather reports for more information.
- Winter storm warning means that a winter storm is occurring or will soon occur in your area.
- Blizzard warning means that sustained winds or frequent gusts to 35 miles per hour or greater and considerable amounts of falling or blowing snow (reducing visibility to less than a quarter mile) are expected to prevail for a period of three hours or longer.
- Frost/freeze warning means that below freezing temperatures are expected.

Explosions

In property management, most explosions are either mechanical or chemical in nature. Gas tanks, meth labs, dangerous chemicals and more all could result in the reality of having to deal with an explosion onsite. Know what chemicals and other hazards are at risk of explosion in your community, and know them well enough to know the specific dangers they present.

These guidelines will give you a starting place in knowing how to react if you have an explosion onsite. If you know you have chemicals that pose a particular risk, consider adapting these guidelines to be more specific for your property and company.

Before

While you can't predict an explosion, you can take certain steps to minimize the risk for your property and company.

- Have a thorough inventory of all chemicals on property and always store them properly.
- Make sure storage areas are well ventilated for anything that runs the risk of building up pressure and exploding.

During

- Take cover that will protect you from flying glass or debris.
- Call 911.
 - Give accurate directions to the property and identify the location of the explosion. Let them know if the explosion is near the maintenance shop, boiler room or chemical storage area.
 - Follow directions from emergency personnel to minimize the destruction of the property, enforce crowd control and ensure the safety of all individuals.
- Call your property supervisor as quickly as possible.
- Shut the power and water off to the affected buildings immediately.

After

- Determine if evacuation is necessary. If it is necessary and safe, start the evacuation process. Wait for the fire department to arrive if you cannot proceed with the evacuation safely. Do not put yourself at risk.
- After exiting the building, stay clear of the fire fighters and equipment. Immediately go to your designated meeting point.
- If the media arrive, follow your company's policy for media response. If your company doesn't have a policy, refer to the tips for working with the media in this guide.
- Prepare a notice approved by your property supervisor to be distributed to all residents. Make them aware of the explosion and the steps you are taking to help affected residents and reconstruct affected apartments.
- Contact the appropriate person within your company for assistance with renovations and securing the affected units.
- If there is significant structural damage, arrange for temporary fencing and lighting around the affected buildings. Put a trash dumpster next to the building. If looting is likely to occur, consider arranging for security guards to patrol the area.
- Do not allow demolition of the affected units to take place until the insurance company adjuster views the damage unless specifically instructed otherwise.

Meth Labs

Methamphetamine (meth) is a man-made amphetamine that has prolonged effects on the central nervous system and is extremely addictive. It is made or “cooked” from common materials including over-the-counter cold medicine, solvents, acids and bases such as acetone, lye, Coleman fuel, hydrochloric or muriatic acid and iodine, creating five-to-seven pounds of chemical waste for each pound of meth manufactured.

Meth labs are highly portable and may be set up in apartment communities. After a lab has been shut down, the unit usually is contaminated with hazardous chemicals.

Warning Signs

Contact the local police department immediately if you suspect the presence of a meth lab. For your own safety, do not investigate the suspected laboratory or confront the residents. Many labs are equipped with security devices or booby traps that could cause serious injuries or death.

Possible signs of a meth lab or other drug-related activity include:

- Strong chemical odors such as ether or ammonia
- Blacked-out windows
- Frequent visitors at odd times
- Rent payments made in cash
- Excessive trash including fuel cans, antifreeze containers and other household products
- Red-stained walls, stripped batteries and blue, corroded valves on propane cylinders
- Lots of plastic, glass or metal containers linked together with plastic tubing, and
- Lots of packages of over the counter cold medicines, either empty or full.

Discovery

- Never try to stop or interrupt the production process. Doing so increases the risk of contaminating yourself or surrounding apartments. In some cases, you could inadvertently create an explosion.
- OSHA has specific requirements for people entering meth labs. Failure to follow these may expose an individual to health and safety risks, which could lead to liability issues.
- If you suspect you’ve walked into a meth lab, hold your breath, back out of the unit and touch nothing, including light switches or canisters. Again, do not try to stop or interrupt the production process.
- Your shoes are likely to be contaminated from walking into the unit. Don’t use your vehicle or go to the office or into another apartment with those shoes on. Use your cell phone or ask a neighbor to call the police. Stay where you are or move to a neutral location until police arrive and give further directions.

Response

- Cleanup must be conducted by hazmat-trained, independent contractors under supervision of police or fire department.
- Media coverage of the lingering effects of meth labs is increasing. Your residents may have questions, and you should be prepared to answer them. See the publication “Voluntary Guidelines for Methamphetamine Laboratory Cleanup” provided here http://www.epa.gov/osweroel/meth_lab_guidelines.pdf by the Environmental Protection Agency. While the publication is meant for state and local government personnel charged with remediating or otherwise addressing former meth labs, it may help answer questions. Talk with your property supervisor before you respond to residents’ questions.

Violence in the Workplace

According to OSHA, workplace violence is any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation or other threatening, disruptive behavior that occurs at work. Workplace violence ranges from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and even homicide. While workplace violence can strike anywhere, exchanging money with the public and working alone or in small groups are two risk factors that may increase the risk of violence for onsite teams.

Since risk factors affecting onsite teams can be identified, owners and management companies should take appropriate precautions to minimize the risk. OSHA recommends that employers establish a zero-tolerance policy toward workplace violence and says that this policy should cover anyone who comes in contact with company personnel.

If you have an incident of violence on property, it is likely to attract the media. Refer to the section in this guide about communicating with the media, and always remember to know and follow your company's policy for working with the media.

Common types of violence at apartment communities include:

- Bomb threats—Treat every bomb threat as real and take it seriously. Do not try to find or handle a bomb and use only conventional telephones (not cell phones) when dealing with a bomb threat. If you receive a bomb threat, remain calm and document as much about the call as possible, including the EXACT wording of the threat, the apparent gender and age of the caller, the characteristics of the caller's voice and background sounds.
- Personal injury threats—Make sure the manager is aware of the threat. Relay all the details you can remember about the threat so that the manager can help you determine how likely it is that the person will act on the threat.
- Family violence—If you use TAA's Lease Contract, refer to paragraph 22, which covers the resident's right to terminate the lease contract in certain cases of family violence or sexual assault. Be familiar with the warning signs of family violence and notify the manager if you suspect family violence. The manager will then work with the property supervisor and the police to take appropriate action.

Violence in the workplace can take many shapes and forms, and it's impossible to prepare for them. As with any situation, make sure your onsite manager and property supervisor are aware, remain calm and be compassionate.

Terrorism

Terroristic threats fall into several categories. Please visit www.ready.gov for more in-depth information on each type of threat.

- **Biological threats** are the deliberate release of germs or other biological substances that can make people sick. Biological agents can be dispersed by spraying them into the air, infecting animals that carry the disease to humans and contaminating food and water.
- **Chemical threats** are poisonous vapors, aerosols, liquids and solids that have toxic effects on people, animals or plants. Signs of a chemical release include people having difficulty breathing, experiencing eye irritation, losing coordination, becoming nauseated or having a burning sensation in the nose, throat and lungs. The presence of many dead insects or birds may also indicate a chemical agent release.
- **Cyber threats** include viruses erasing entire computer systems, intruders breaking into computer systems and altering files, intruders using your computer or device to attack others, or intruders stealing confidential information. If you suspect a cyber-attack on your computer systems, alert your company's information technology department immediately.
- **Explosions** have been a common method of attack for terrorists since instructions on how to make bombs are easily available online and in books. Refer to the information on explosions earlier in this guide for more information.
- A **nuclear blast** is an explosion with intense light and heat, a damaging pressure wave, and widespread radioactive material that can contaminate the air, water and ground surfaces for miles around. Experts say that the danger of a nuclear attack on the United States is less likely today.
- A **radiological dispersion device (RDD)** combines a conventional explosive device such as a bomb with radioactive material. RDDs scatter dangerous and sub-lethal amounts of radioactive material over a general area. Terrorists use RDDs to cause psychological fear and economic disruption.

National Terrorism Advisory System

The National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS) is intended to effectively communicate information about terrorist threats by providing timely, detailed information to the public, government agencies, first responders, airports and other transportation hubs, and the private sector.

NTAS includes two levels of alerts:

1. An Imminent Threat Alert warns of a credible, specific and impending terrorist threat against the United States.
2. An Elevated Threat Alert warns of a credible terrorist threat against the United States.

NTAS Alerts are based on the nature of the threat. In some cases, alerts are sent directly to law enforcement or affected areas of the private sector. In other cases, alerts are issued more broadly through both official and media channels to all Americans. For more information about NTAS, visit www.dhs.gov/alerts.

Anti-Terrorism Guidelines for Rental Housing Owners and Managers from the Los Angeles Police Department

The Los Angeles Police Department has developed the following guidelines:

- Thoroughly follow your company's procedures for completing background checks as part of the application process. Focus particularly on:
 - Does the potential resident have valid state identification?
 - Verify that the vehicles are registered to the prospective resident.
 - Be cautious of prospective residents using only rental vehicles.
 - Be cautious of prospective residents with little or no previous rental history.

- Verify that the prospective resident is able to pay rent.
- Verify employment thoroughly.
- Be cautious of prospective residents who are looking for month-to-month or week-to-week rentals.
- Be cautious of residents who pay rent with cash only, money orders or third-party checks unless they have established a consistent record of doing so.
- Be cautious of prospective residents who only want to rent ground-floor apartments unless the request is due to a disability.
- Be cautious of prospective residents who show undue concern for renting an apartment that cannot be seen by other homes or apartments.
- Be cautious of prospective residents who claim to operate non-zoned business applications such as jewelry, industrial art, metal work, electric repair or chemistry.
- Observe new residents when they move in to see if they are bringing in any unusual items such as machinery; liquid containers; barrels; buckets, drums, sacks and bags; compressed air tanks; boxes carried with extreme caution; large batteries; electrical wire and fireworks.
- Monitor resident activity in public areas to be sure that it is consistent with your company's policies. Watch for unusual or oddly sized packages being brought into units.
- Watch for residents who use an apartment in unusual ways such as rarely occupying the unit or over-occupying the unit with more people than allowed on the lease contract.
- Monitor for unusual odors emanating from units such as gasoline, diesel fuel, ammonia, sulfur, acids or the odor of fireworks.
- Watch for unusual digging or trenching near ground-floor units.
- Watch for unusual guest traffic to a single unit.
- Newer communities where residents are less likely to know each other and in more densely developed areas are more likely to attract a potential terrorist. High-rise apartment buildings with large numbers of units are also attractive to potential terrorists.
- Install surveillance equipment to serve as a deterrent to criminal activity.
- Watch for residents or guests using special knocks or signal devices such as hanging towels, opening curtains or placing a cushion in a special way.
- Watch for residents who change the locks without approval.

Onsite managers who observe suspicious activity consistent with these guidelines should immediately contact their local police department.

Identifying suspicious packages and envelopes

The following guidelines for identifying suspicious packages and envelopes come from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Some characteristics of suspicious packages and envelopes include:

- Inappropriate or unusual labeling
- Excessive postage
- Handwritten or poorly typed addresses
- Misspellings of common words
- Strange or no return address
- Incorrect titles or title without a name
- Not addressed to a specific person
- Marked with restrictions, such as personal, confidential or do not x-ray
- Marked with any threatening language, and
- Postmarked from a city or state that does not match the return address.

The appearance of the package can also provide hints that the package is suspicious.

- Powdery substance felt through or appearing on the package or envelope
- Oily stains, discolorations or odor
- Lopsided or uneven envelope, and
- Excessive packaging material such as masking tape or string.

Other signs the package may be suspicious include:

- Excessive weight
- Ticking sound, and
- Protruding wires or aluminum foil.

If a package or envelope appears suspicious, do not open it.

- Do not shake or empty the contents of any suspicious package or envelope.
- Do not carry the package or envelope, show it to others or allow others to examine it.
- Put the package or envelope down on a stable surface. Do not sniff, touch, taste or look closely at it or at any contents that may have spilled.
- Alert others in the area about the suspicious package or envelope. Leave the area, close doors, and take actions to prevent others from entering the area. If possible, shut off the ventilation system.
- Anyone who handled the package needs to immediately wash their hands with soap and water to prevent spreading potentially infectious material to their face or skin.
- Notify the onsite manager of the suspicious package. The manager should call the police and your property supervisor.
- Create a list of people who were in the area when the suspicious package was recognized. Create another list of people who may have handled the package. Give these lists to the police.

Real Estate Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ISAC)

The Real Estate ISAC is a public-private partnership between the United States real estate industry and the federal government to counter terrorism and protect buildings and the people who occupy and use them. The National Apartment Association is a member of the Real Estate ISAC as are a number of other national real estate associations.

The Real Estate ISAC serves three primary roles:

- Disseminate information from the federal government, including terrorist alerts and advisories, to real estate industry participants, and bring government officials and building owners and operators together to assess and evaluate the information so that the information is more useful and actionable for real estate.
- Facilitate the industry's reporting to government authorities of credible threats to real estate assets, and enable analysis of the information to detect patterns or trends and to develop potentially coordinated action steps.
- Bring private and public sector experts together to share useful information and discuss and develop best practices and solutions on sub-sector specific issues such as matters affecting retail or office property owners or cross-sector issues such as risk assessment, asset fortification/hardening, building security and emergency-response planning.

The Real Estate ISAC asks that rental housing owners and managers report suspicious activity only after the incidents have been reported to local, regional or federal counter-terrorism authorities and only if the authorities took concrete follow-up actions. Visit www.reisac.org for more information.

Handling a Death Onsite

Discovery of the death of a resident should be treated with great discretion and confidentiality. Depending on the circumstances, you might need to contact the police department before you go to the apartment to investigate.

Before Discovery

If you are asked to check on a resident:

- Document the caller's name, phone number, relationship to the resident and details about why the caller is concerned about the resident.
- Take another employee with you when you go to check on the resident.
- Enter the apartment if no one responds to your knock.

Discovery

If you find the resident and there are signs of life, call 911 immediately.

If the resident is deceased:

- Leave the apartment in the exact condition you found it in.
- Lock the door to the unit.
- Call the police, who will notify the resident's next of kin.
- Notify your onsite manager, who will notify the property supervisor.

After discovery

- Allow no one other than police to access the apartment.
- Change the locks as soon as the police give approval. Check with your property supervisor or legal counsel before you give a new key to the roommate or spouse.
- Outside contractors may need to be hired to clean the apartment.
- Request a copy of the police report from the investigating officer. While you want to cooperate fully with the police, check with your property supervisor for authorization before you release resident files to the police.
- Follow your company's policy regarding incident reporting.

Do not allow anyone other than police to access the deceased's apartment, including family members and attorneys. In some cases, a court order is required before the next of kin may enter. The law may require that the apartment be totally sealed. Even if a friend or relative has a key, that friend or relative cannot enter the apartment with police approval. Contact your legal counsel for specific instructions.

If your property uses the TAA Lease Contract, refer to paragraph 22 dealing with the death of the sole resident:

Paragraph 22: Death of Sole Resident. If you are the sole resident and die during the Lease Contract term, the Lease Contract may be terminated without penalty by an authorized representative of your estate with at least 30 days written notice. Your estate will be liable for payment of rent until the latter of: (1) the termination date, or (2) until all possessions in the apartment are removed. Your estate will also be liable for all charges and damages to the apartment until it is vacated, and any removal and storage costs.

Before you begin clean-up in the apartment, consult with your property supervisor. In most cases, the clean-up of the apartment must be done in accordance with regulations for dealing with biohazards and may need to be done by an outside contractor.

Media Attention

Depending on the circumstances, the property may get calls from the media. Remember to follow your company's policy in regards to who is authorized to respond to media requests. If your company does not have a written policy, refer to the guidelines in this guide.

Chemical Releases

With chemicals on property for the maintenance of the property and in residents' units for their personal use, chances are that you'll have to respond to an incident involving the release or spill of chemicals at some point.

When a chemical release happens on property, you must have a spill response plan that includes appropriate procedures and materials to adequately contain and clean up the spill. Knowing the properties of the specific chemicals that you have onsite is an important component of your plan. We have included general guidelines here regarding preventing and responding to chemical releases. When in doubt, consult the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for the chemical in question for a minor spill or call 911 for a major spill.

When a chemical spill occurs in the area near your property, emergency personnel may evacuate some residents depending on the severity of the spill. Always cooperate with emergency personnel and assist with the evacuation if they request assistance.

If the media shows up on property in response to the spill, follow your company's policy regarding who is allowed to speak to the media. Refer to the guidelines earlier in this guide for tips on working with the media.

Before

Safety is key when working with chemicals. Follow these tips to reduce the frequency of chemical releases on property.

- Know what chemicals you have on property.
- Store the chemicals properly and label all containers clearly.
- Have a spill kit easily accessible that includes the appropriate types and amounts of clean-up materials. See the list of recommended spill kit contents below.
- Review the MSDS or other references for recommended spill clean-up methods and materials and which personal protective equipment you'll need before you begin using the chemical.

Clean-up procedures for a minor chemical release

If the chemical spill does not pose an immediate risk to health and does not involve chemical contamination to the body, you should be able to clean the spill yourself.

- Immediately inform the onsite manager and property supervisor of the accident.
- Isolate the area as much as possible. Determine if evacuation is necessary.
- Remove ignition sources and unplug nearby electrical equipment.
- Establish exhaust ventilation. If the spill occurred inside a building, vent vapors to outside of the building only.
- Retrieve your spill kit.
- Choose appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Confine and contain the spill. Cover the spill with appropriate absorbent material. Acid and base spills should be neutralized prior to cleanup. Sweep solid material into a plastic dust pan and place in a sealed five gallon container.
- Wet mop the spill area. Be sure to decontaminate broom, dustpan and any other equipment you used. Put all contaminated items such as gloves and clothing into a sealed five gallon container or plastic bag.
- Dispose of all waste properly.

Clean-up procedures for a major chemical release

If the chemical spill poses an immediate risk to health or involves an uncontrolled fire or explosion, you may need to call 911.

- Immediately alert the onsite manager, who will call the property supervisor as soon as is practical.
- Do not clean up spills if the material is mixed with other articles such as grass, paper or other chemicals or if the material is reacting, i.e. hissing, bubbling, smoking, gassing or burning.
- If there is any sign that a chemical reaction is happening, evacuate the area immediately and call 911. Remember that if emergency personnel are onsite, they may take the lead with evacuation procedures.
- Without endangering yourself, attend to any people who may be contaminated.
- Contaminated clothing must be removed immediately and the skin flushed for 15 minutes with water. Contaminated clothing must be laundered before reuse.
- Put on the appropriate personal protective equipment before proceeding to control the spill.
- Stop the spill as quickly as possible by restoring the container to its upright position, closing a leaking valve or hose or putting a secondary container in place to catch the leaking solution.
- Begin clean-up promptly. On pavement or concrete, use absorbent materials to capture the spilled liquids. Nonchlorinated pet litter is an inexpensive absorbent material for such purposes.
- Loose absorbent materials should be distributed over the entire spill area, working from the outside, circling to the inside. This reduces the chance of splash or spread of the chemical.
- Once the spilled materials have been absorbed, use a brush and scoop to place materials in a polyethylene bag for small spills or a reusable screw-top plastic container with polyethylene liners for larger quantities.
- If a spill occurs on soil, it may be necessary to dig up the contaminated soil.
- Keep an eye on the material once it has been picked up because there may be a delayed reaction.
- Affix a label to the chemical waste, identifying the material as spill debris naming the chemical.
- Decontaminate the surface areas after clean-up where the spill occurred using a mild detergent and water, when appropriate.
- Dispose of all contaminated materials according to the manufacturer's instructions and the local regulations.

After

- After the chemical release, immediately inform the residents of the affected buildings who were not at the scene of the spill.
- If any residents have been displaced, contact your property supervisor regarding housing options.
- Follow your company's procedures regarding incident reporting.

Recommended spill kit inventory

- Personal protective equipment including chemical splash goggles, chemical-resistant gloves in various sizes, shoe covers and an apron
- Absorption materials including nonchlorinated pet litter, spill pad for acid, base and oil solvents
- Miscellaneous containers and supplies including heavy-duty polyethylene plastic bags, a reusable screw-top plastic container, snap-together dustpan and whisk broom
- Neutralizing materials including an acid neutralizer and a caustic neutralizer. Consider using a neutralizer with a built-in color change to indicate complete neutralization.