



## Winter Weather Approaching

Hurricane season is upon us once again. Hurricane Isaac struck Louisiana on the 7-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, once again reminding us of the power and unpredictability of these storms. Hurricanes make the biggest headlines, but measured in terms of aggregate claims coast, severe thunderstorms, tornadoes and hail typically account for the majority of losses. In 2011 Hurricane Irene made national headlines, but severe weather earlier in 2011 actually eclipsed Irene in overall impact. The spring tornado and storm season, taken as a single event, was the 4<sup>th</sup> most costly catastrophe in US insurance history, according to data from the Insurance Industry Institute.

We are now rapidly approaching winter. Last year's record snowfalls and costly winter weather-related property damage in many regions of the country are reminders of the need to prepare building and business operations before extended periods of freezing weather. As a business owner, there are two main areas that need attention before the winter weather sets in: the building itself and day-to-day operations, according to the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS).

IBHS offers guidance on how to avoid the formation of ice dams and how to prevent frozen pipes. While frozen pipes are the leading cause of property damage due to winter weather, record snowfalls in recent years have resulted in roof collapses on businesses from Arizona to New England. This can lead to significant damage to both the building and the contents and prolong the recovery period after the snow melts.

Once you have taken steps to shore up the structure of your building, consider the operations. It is important to have a business continuity plan that can be put into action if severe winter weather forces you to temporarily close, interrupts the supply chain or leaves your business operating with a limited staff.

Another important aspect of winter weather planning for your business is ensuring a consistent power supply. Given the likelihood of lengthy power outages during ice storms, it is important to purchase and learn how to safely operate and maintain a generator before it is needed.

Being prepared includes addressing the potential hazards with your physical building, putting in place an operations plan that can be implemented should severe weather impact your normal business day, and being able to readily assist the insurance company when they come to respond to a claim situation. The preliminary claims process is accelerated when companies maintain and can quickly produce copies of their financial data and pre-loss asset inventory records. It is also important for business owners to pay close attention to the named storm coverage and limitations in their insurance policy versus the coverage and limitations for wind and hail damage.

For more IBHS information on preparing for severe weather and preventing commercial building losses, visit [www.DisasterSafety.org](http://www.DisasterSafety.org).

If you have any questions or would like any additional information on the insurance policies available at Thum Insurance Agency, please call 800-866-0777. Office hours are 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

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