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Reviewing emergency response plans to ensure safety

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Summer is here to stay! While the beginning of June started off with a lot of rain (more than many states get in the entire year) we have not begun to reap the rewards with some very warm temperatures. Albeit we are still experiencing some major thunderstorms and even some tornado activity which have most real estate management professionals reviewing their emergency response plans to ensure the safety and security of all tenants.

Throughout the year, yet another task that real estate managers need to manage is the emergency response plans. While these plans encompass a variety of scenarios from acts of terrorism, employee or tenant domestic issues, HR related issues, building equipment issues, etc. the major one that we really can never anticipate or properly be prepared for is a weather related issue. While we all anticipate our buildings to withstand weather issues, over the past few years we have seen that no matter what plans you have in place or whatever measures you have taken to reinforce your building, no one can anticipate or be prepared for every scenario. Most real estate managers have always taken security and safety of their employees into account whether by having security access systems to performing annual fire drills, but we now need to consider Shelter in Place drills as well as providing tenants shelter in the event of a disaster in the local area and/or our own facility.

While we cannot plan for every scenario, reviewing any emergency management plans and having a disaster recovery plan available will greatly assist you in the event such a situation occurs. First and foremost, safety of tenants is paramount so preparing our tenants by doing drills and keeping updated on any weather related issues in and around your property every day is essential. Large property management firms most likely have basic emergency preparedness plans which can be updated for specific properties but smaller firms would benefit by using the Internet to look at sample plans and/or attending seminars on emergency planning. I know that Southern Connecticut BOMA has had a few seminars on emergency planning to provide our members with information on developing plans as well as resources within BOMA and outside BOMA with development of such plans.

June is just the beginning of this volatile time of year here in the Northeast and we have seen issues arise from now through October. Having resources available at your fingertips and getting informed about what others are doing to mitigate issues should a disaster occur in your area is the best way to be prepared. It is also good to meet with your local fire and police departments so that you are aware of what type of response you can anticipate from them in the event of a local disaster. While some areas have full-time emergency personnel, others may have volunteer forces that cover their local area, so knowing what resources are available and response times you can anticipate at your facility is imperative as you build your plan. In extreme situations, emergency locations such as hospitals and local shelters are going to get support first in order to assist any injured or misplaced individuals.

It may be necessary for you to house not only your existing tenants, but assist other local tenants that have had some type of disaster at their sites. Again, building relationships with other building managers as well as public authorities will go a long way in not only building your plans but providing you with options to ensure the safety and security of your tenants at all times.

While we can never be prepared for every scenario the more planning and reviewing of our emergency plans the more confidence we have that we are doing the best to provide a safe and secure environment for our tenants in the event of an emergency situation at our building. Prepare, plan, practice!

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