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Ask the electrician: Is your facility ready for cold weather? - by Brian Leborgne

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Winter is here, and it's important to be prepared for whatever the season may bring, including weather events and other disasters that can cause power outages and infrastructure damage. Here are some tips to help get your building ready for the cold weather season:

Consult your electrical contractor. Whether you work with a large regional contractor like Interstate or a small team of electricians, your contractor can help you plan for outages and other service interruptions. They can help you rent and coordinate generators, collaborate with other key teams, and create and execute an action plan. If you've worked with your contractor before, they will have a helpful record of work in your building and will likely know key details such as voltage, phase rotation, and ampacity, which are essential for power restoration.

Know your building and make a plan. Most people don't realize the importance of considering power consumption, but you need to know approximately how much power your building draws to ensure you have a generator of the correct size in the event of an outage. Keep your power utility bills easily accessible to track your usage. In the event of an emergency, consider which systems or floors are most important to bring back online first. For example, a grocery store should prioritize refrigeration units, while a computer security company should ensure mission-critical servers and systems are back online first.

Plan ahead for a generator. Generators are in high demand when a widespread power outage strikes. Businesses with multiple locations, such as grocery stores and restaurants, often put down a deposit at the beginning of the winter season or before a large storm to reserve generators. This guarantees they will have backup power when needed. For everyone else, it's typically first come, first served when renting a generator. Do your best to plan ahead and reserve the proper size generator for your building.

Have equipment tested and inspected regularly. It's important to have your building's electrical equipment tested and inspected regularly by licensed and certified electricians. While most vital electrical components have a long lifespan, it's important to keep them maintained. This ensures your electrical contractor will have up-to-date records of the entire electrical system and will have an easier time restoring backup power to the building when needed. At Interstate, we keep extensive records of each jobsite and serviced building, ensuring we are prepared for a revisit in the future.

Designate a point person. If possible, designate a point person on-site who knows the building well. This could be you, one of your employees, or even one of your clients in the building. They don't necessarily need to know the technical workings of the building, but they should know how to access the basement and where the electrical room is located. If you can't find someone who can be on-site, make sure you have an expert ready by phone for any questions that may arise.

By following these tips, you can help protect your commercial facility and its occupants in the event

of a winter weather event or other disaster.

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