

Safety Newsletter

Spring – Summer 2011

R.C. Diocese of Syracuse
Risk Management Office

Preparing for Floods and Water

Earlier this Spring, Central New York, along with many other areas of the nation, experienced many inches of rain falling over a very short period of time. This led to flooding and the backing up of drains and sewers in many buildings. You can prepare yourself for this and reduce the extent of damage by following these steps:

Before The Rain or Flood Occurs:

- Make sure your parish buildings have working sump pumps wherever necessary.
- Install a battery-operated backup for sump pumps, in case of power failure, which often accompanies heavy rains and flooding.
- Consider installing water alarms in basements or on first floor areas.
- Place all storage on raised shelving, rather than directly on the floor. Leave storage off of the very bottom shelf on storage shelf units.
- Raise your electrical components (switches, sockets, circuit breakers and wiring) at least 12 inches above the projected flood elevation.
- Place the furnace, water heater, washer and dryer on cement blocks at least 12 inches above the projected flood elevation.
- Move furniture, clothing, boxes, and important documents to elevated areas.
- Make sure that all floor drains are cleaned out and will allow good flow of water down and out of the building.
- Clean out gutters and downspouts on all buildings. Clogged drainage outside can lead to water entering a building.
- Have a plan in place for alternative places to stay if you have to leave your residence. Have alternative plans and a communication process in place if parish activities have to be cancelled or postponed.

During A Rain or Flood Event:

- Be prepared with a list of contractors, who charge a reasonable price, who are able to quickly perform emergency clean up services. Contact the Diocese Risk Management Office to discuss your plans and the contractors you may use.
- Regularly inspect your basement, or other flood/water-prone areas, to make sure they are dry and secure. Do not overlook going into closed, unused buildings.
- Check roofs and roof drainage while the rain is falling, to make sure that the rainwater is being sufficiently handled.

After A Rain or Flood Event:

- Take stock of the condition of your buildings. Inspect all areas. Contact the Diocese Risk Management Office to discuss damage and repairs.
- Take immediate steps to clean up any sitting water on floor or other surfaces. Turn on dehumidifiers and secure additional dehumidifying equipment as needed. Immediate clean up and dry-up activities can prevent more extensive, permanent damage.
- Review the preventative steps you had taken, and had not taken, and evaluate your preparation. What actions can be taken to prevent damage in the future?

Taking preventative actions before a flood and immediate actions during and after a flood can greatly reduce the damage and help you to avoid many potential problems.

Volunteers

With the better weather coming, parishes and many other Diocese locations are focusing on outside maintenance of their buildings and grounds. We often have many who are willing to volunteer for outdoor projects. We are reminding everyone that, while volunteer efforts are appreciated, we must take care in the assigning of certain jobs to volunteers. No volunteers should be allowed to use power tools or lawn equipment. Volunteers should not be given any jobs or responsibilities that involve using a ladders, or getting onto any raised surfaces or areas. Electrical and plumbing work and any significant building structural work should be given only to qualified professionals and contractors. Tree trimming should be only be done by qualified professionals. Use good judgment on any work that requires lifting. Back injuries are a common result of improper lifting techniques and/or the failure to seek assistance. Volunteers and employees alike should not attempt to lift any heavy objects without assistance.

Parish Festivals and Summer Events

This is just a reminder that all parish festivals or major events require much pre-planning for safety. Any outside vendors that are used must provide certificates of insurance showing they have general liability and workers compensation coverage. Contact the Diocese Risk Management Office if you have any questions. We welcome all calls to discuss safety precautions for any parish activities. For more detailed information on Parish festivals, please see our Spring-Summer 2010 safety newsletter which is posed in the Risk Management area of the Diocese of Syracuse website. <http://www.syracusediocese.org>