

Condo Smarts

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Dear Condo Smarts: The heavy snow just before Christmas left our building without power and a non functional generator. No heat, no elevators, no parking gates, and our sumps were not powered to deal with the rising water in the parking garage. Luckily, the power outage was short, but had we experienced a longer outage like 2008, our property would have been in serious trouble. We have decided to take a proactive interest in developing a disaster plan to at least be better prepared to protect our property and our residents. Any suggestions would be helpful.

Jon White

Dear Jon: No matter what emergency event occurs or when it comes, we will still have to maintain our residential properties and commercial interests. For anyone who has survived a building fire or major water escape, the benefits of a reasonable disaster or emergency plan are immediately obvious. Disasters and emergencies that affect buildings may relate to sudden internal water escape, flood or fire, severe weather events, industrial disasters, air crash, earthquakes and tsunamis, community infrastructure failure such as electricity, natural gas, or communications. Over the last 100 years, each of these incidents has occurred in British Columbia, occasionally with a loss of life and serious injury, but always with a significant loss to property and personal cost. Simply executing a disaster plan is insufficient unless your community also has an awareness program that is routinely delivered and

updated to the residents and owners of the property.

Check lists are critical planning and operations tools for transportation, health care, security, national defense, financial institutions, government operations, utility planning and service, emergency responders, and public safety. A reliable check list provides the user with a complete list of obligations, duties, time frames, and directions in the event of a disaster. They are easily published and used as a continuing education model for your clients. During the recent hurricane in the U.S. one of the television announcers was advising that viewers go to web sites for more information. If you are using a web site for disaster planning after the event, it is too late, and it is likely you have no power or access to the web in any event. Publish check lists that assist owners, occupants, tenants, strata councils, strata managers, service providers and emergency responders with the information they need to access your buildings and address the immediate crisis. Create a few simple check lists and who they should affect. Start with identifying who needs to complete a plan and take inventory of your occupants and property. The *Strata Property Act* requires that owners, tenants and occupants must identify themselves to the strata corporation. This is essential in emergency planning for building evacuation. In 1962, hurricane Freda made it clear to BC residents that we are not immune to the disasters shared by the rest of the world. The best plan is one we never have to implement.

For more information on CHOA resources and benefits visit www.choa.bc.ca
or contact the office at 1-877-353-2462 or email office@choa.bc.ca.

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Home Owners, Occupants, Tenants:

Educate yourselves on emergency exits and building procedures. Inform the strata council of the names of all occupants and pets.

Maintain your occupant insurance, including a living out allowance in the event the building cannot be occupied. Review the strata corporation insurance policy with your insurance broker to secure the best coverage and fill in the gaps. The strata corporation will not be responsible for your living out accommodations.

Maintain a water proof safety kit including a battery or manually charged radio, several LED or manually charged flash lights, extra batteries, water and non perishable food for at least 72 hours, can opener, mobile phone, medication, important documents, emergency blankets, and emergency contact information for your family and your pets.

Establish an emergency contact or location in the event your family is separated. Make sure you update your kit regularly.

Do not use open flames such as candles or barbeques in or adjacent to buildings in the event of an emergency that may have compromised the gas delivery system, such as a gas line break or earthquake. Never use mobile generators indoors.

Strata Councils and Managers:

A disaster averted is management at its best. Create check lists for all building systems and operations.

Consolidate a master service plan that lists all suppliers and emergency responders. Provide a copy of the check lists and service responder plans to every council member.

Identify the shut off locations for gas, water, electrical, security. Mark door entries for

these areas with security protocols and access requirements.

Educate your owners and occupants annually. An emergency status report as part of the annual meeting notice package and post disaster plan reminders in elevators and public areas.

Maintain and review your insurance annually and report the insurance immediately upon renewal to your owners and occupants. Owners and tenants are named insureds on the policy.

Maintain owner, tenant and pet lists. They may be crucial in a building failure, and a critical tool in assisting emergency responders.

Identify anyone who has special access limitations or requirements.

For more information go to the provincial web site www.embc.bc.ca or your local city web sites who all provide helpful tools in planning.

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