

What to Do in the First 24 Hours After a Commercial Property Loss

A fire, severe storm, burst pipe or other unexpected incident can disrupt business operations in an instant. While the damage itself may be unavoidable, the actions taken during the first 24 hours can significantly influence the claims process and the speed of recovery. By responding promptly and documenting the situation carefully, businesses can help protect both their property and their insurance claim. Consider the following actions:

Prioritise Safety

Before entering a damaged building, ensure it is safe. Structural damage, gas leaks, electrical hazards or other dangerous conditions should be evaluated by emergency responders or utility companies before anyone enters the building. If the loss involves theft or vandalism, contact the police immediately. A crime reference number is often required when making an insurance claim for these types of loss.

Notify Your Insurer

Commercial property policies generally require losses to be reported as soon as possible. Prompt notification allows the insurer to begin investigating the claim and appointing a loss adjuster.

When reporting the loss, be prepared with the following:

- Your policy number
- The date and time of the incident
- A brief description of what happened

Avoid estimating repair costs or speculating about the cause until professionals have completed their assessments. After calling the claims team, follow up in writing and notify your insurance broker, who can help guide you through the claims process.

Document the Damage

Before cleaning up or making repairs, thoroughly document the damage. Take photographs and videos of affected areas, equipment, stock and structural damage.

Time-stamped images provide valuable evidence during the claims process.

It is also important to:

- Preserve damaged property whenever possible until the loss adjuster has inspected it.
- Keep a written log of damage, conversations and actions taken.
- Gather pre-loss photos, inspection records and maintenance documents.
- Save receipts for emergency repairs and mitigation expenses.

Good documentation often helps prevent disputes and supports a faster settlement.

Prevent Additional Damage

Insurance policies typically require policyholders to take reasonable steps to prevent further loss. Temporary measures may include boarding up broken windows, covering damaged roofs with tarpaulins, shutting off utilities or removing standing water. These actions help reduce additional damage while preserving the property for inspection. Keep receipts for any emergency expenses, as these costs may be recoverable under your policy.

Track Business Interruption

If operations are interrupted, begin documenting the financial impact immediately. Record cancelled orders, lost sales, additional operating costs and payroll impacts. Maintaining accurate financial records will help support any business interruption claim covered by your policy.

Conclusion

Recovering from commercial property damage begins long before disaster strikes. Working with knowledgeable insurance professionals can help your business understand its property cover, strengthen risk control measures and prepare for future incidents.

Contact the insurance professionals at MacKay Corporate Insurance Brokers to learn more about protecting your business and ensuring you have cover that meets your organisation's unique needs.

Creating a Risk Assessment Plan

Every business faces risk. Some risks support growth, such as expanding into new markets or launching new products. Others, including cyber-attacks, severe weather, workplace incidents and supply chain disruption, can threaten operations, finances and long-term success. Rather than reacting after problems occur, organisations can benefit from a structured risk assessment plan that identifies potential threats before they become costly events.

What Is a Risk Assessment Plan?

A risk assessment plan is a framework that helps organisations identify, evaluate and manage risks consistently across the business. It establishes how risks will be assessed, who is responsible for managing them and how the organisation will monitor changing conditions over time.

When integrated into broader risk management and compliance programmes, a well-designed plan supports better decision-making and helps businesses allocate resources where they are needed most.

7 Steps to Building a Strong Plan

Developing an effective risk assessment plan does not need to be complicated, but it should be systematic.

Key steps include the following:

1. **Define the scope.** Determine which business activities, departments and operations the plan will cover, along with the organisation's overall risk tolerance.
2. **Establish assessment methods.** Create consistent criteria for evaluating risks based on factors such as likelihood, severity and business impact.
3. **Engage stakeholders.** Include representatives from key departments, including operations, finance, IT and senior management, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of organisational risks.
4. **Assign accountability.** Clearly identify who owns specific risks, who conducts assessments and who is responsible for implementing corrective actions.
5. **Create a review schedule.** Establish timetables for regular assessments and define events—such as regulatory changes, workplace incidents or operational changes—that should trigger additional reviews.
6. **Standardise documentation.** Maintain consistent records of assessments, findings and mitigation measures to support decision-making and demonstrate due diligence.
7. **Continuously improve.** Regularly review the plan, monitor performance measures and update risk assessments as business operations and external threats evolve.

Avoid Common Pitfalls

Even well-intentioned risk management efforts can fall short if responsibilities are unclear or assessments are inconsistent. Organisations may struggle when departments evaluate risks differently, documentation is incomplete or reviews are postponed.

Keeping the process standardised, assigning clear ownership and reviewing the plan regularly helps ensure risks are identified and addressed before they escalate.

Conclusion

Business risks will continue to evolve as organisations grow and external conditions change. A structured risk assessment plan provides a practical road map for identifying threats, prioritising resources and strengthening operational resilience before losses occur.

Accurate information is essential to an effective risk management programme. For more risk management guidance, contact us today.

A risk assessment plan is most effective when it becomes an ongoing business process—not a one-time exercise. Regular reviews help organisations respond to changing operations, emerging threats and new regulatory requirements before problems arise.