



Be prepared for spring *storms*

Take steps to mitigate the possibility and severity of storm loss to ensure your business can resume operations as quickly as possible

Key Points

1. It is of utmost importance to have an emergency procedure in place for the protection and safety of all employees and business property.
2. Just an inch of water in your business can cause thousands of dollars of damage.
3. It is essential that you review your insurance policy to make sure you have protection of any buildings, structures, vehicles, equipment, personal property and crops that are part of your business.

As the spring season gears up so does Mother Nature--tornadoes, microbursts, thunderstorms, hail and lightning. At any time, the weather can wreak havoc on life and property, no matter where your greenhouse is located. This is a good time of year for greenhouse operators to review their insurance needs and to determine how to best protect their property and business records.

A tornado can wipe out a business in a matter of minutes. So being prepared and properly insured can make all the difference in how a business recovers from a partial or catastrophic loss.

Make preparations

To reduce the impact of a possible loss, it is of utmost importance to have an emer-

gency procedure in place for the protection and safety of all employees and business property. Emergency instructions, safety guidelines and a chain of command must be clear and

understood. Procedures such as tornado drills should be reviewed and practiced quarterly to allow for adaptations due to changes in the business operations and staff. Computer business files and



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records should be backed up on a regular basis with copies kept off site. Having this information available after a loss assists in the restoration of operations, and it provides necessary documentation for an insurance claim.

Determine any area where electrical power should be turned off in the event of a severe weather warning. Make sure all circuit breakers are labeled. Prepare for an extended power outage by renting or purchasing a generator with adequate wattage to power the equipment and appliances critical to your business' operation. Make sure you have a hand pump or an OSHA-approved gas can to supply fuel to the generator and motor vehicles in the event of a loss of power. Keep all emergency equipment properly serviced and in working order.

Check all greenhouse bracing/supports to make sure they are secure. Make sure drainage systems are clear of debris to allow for removal of excess rainwater or flooding. Pick up loose items around the property that could become airborne during a storm.

If your location is under threat of a possible tornado, consider filling trucks and trailers with valuable plants and park them alongside sturdy buildings. Make sure to maintain an updated inventory of all plants that are on the premises.

Tornadoes, spring rains

Large scale storm systems can cause widespread damage that affect many states. A severe thunderstorm can travel across state lines while producing tornados, hail and dangerous lightning strikes.

All 50 states experience tornadoes. Between 1980 and 2009, Alaska has experienced the fewest tornadoes with only three. During that same period Texas experienced 4,557. The median

average number of tornadoes nationwide per state during that time period was 473 (www.ncdc.noaa.gov).

Greenhouse structures can be designed to withstand winds up to 100 miles an hour with minimal to moderate damage. It is recommended that growers located in active tornado areas consult with a structural engineer before investing in replacement or new structures. Local building codes may satisfy



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the authorities, but they won't protect your business from catastrophic damage.

Thunderstorms that bring gusty winds can cause a great deal of immediate damage. However, it is the torrential rain that often accompanies these storms that can be more damaging than the wind itself. Flash floods happen in all 50 states. Just an inch of water in your business can cause thousands of dollars of damage.

Flood insurance is available through the National Flood Insurance Program (www.fema.gov/business/nfip/). Property owners in all areas should ask their agents if their communities are eligible for the federally-

backed program. Non-residential property owners can insure their buildings up to \$500,000 and contents up to \$500,000.

Nursery businesses that predominately sell plants wholesale also are eligible for Federal Nursery Crop Insurance. Included among the many perils covered by nursery crop policies are losses resulting from adverse weather conditions, including flooding due to excessive rain. Coverage is available to qualified

maintain the necessary inflation pressure between double layers. Keep poly tape on hand to temporarily patch any holes that are discovered.

It is important to maintain some extra stock of the materials used for the greenhouse roof in the event you are able to make immediate or temporary repairs. It is essential to protect the crops when they become exposed to the elements after the loss of the roof. Whether it is to protect the plants from changing temperatures, precipitation or the effects of direct sun, steps must be taken to minimize any disruption to the production cycle.

Lightning

Lightning can strike at any time during a spring storm. Damage to environmental controls and irrigation systems can be devastating to a grower who has greenhouses full of plants. Back-up pumps and temporary manual operation of equipment are important to minimize business disruption. With alternative options ready, a grower should be able to maintain the production conditions that are needed until the repairs can be made.

Point-of-use surge protection devices help protect computer systems from the tremendous voltage lightning strikes can deliver. Easily available at minimal cost, these devices offer a critical line of defense for the safekeeping of a business' electronic records.

Recovery

After a loss has occurred, contact your insurance agent immediately. Lack of immediate notification could impair your carrier's ability to conduct a timely and thorough investigation, which is needed to mitigate your losses and protect your interests.

Take photos or shoot video of damaged property to help

growers on a year-round basis after a 30-day waiting period.

Hail

Hail can cause extensive damage to greenhouse coverings. Shattered glass roofs can scatter broken glass into energy curtains or crops. If a glass greenhouse has significant breakage due to hail, it is imperative the structure be secured to prevent employee or public access.

While broken glass remains in the roof structure, there is a substantial risk of personal injury due to falling glass. Timely action on removing the glass and making repairs is critical.

Polyethylene film roofs impacted by hail may not be able to

the adjuster process your claim. Make a detailed list of the damaged items, including their value and supply receipts if possible. Most importantly, keep your safety and the safety of your employees as the highest priority and don't allow anyone inside a highly damaged or unsafe structure.

Know your insurance policy

It is essential that you review your insurance policy to make sure you have protection of any buildings, structures, vehicles, equipment, personal property and crops that are part of your business. When insuring buildings and greenhouses, it is important to consider all permanently installed equipment such as boilers, coolers, pumps,



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soil mixing and handling equipment, conveyors and irrigation or environmental controls. If existing buildings have been renovated or new structures constructed, it is important to

keep your agent advised so that your policy can be updated.

Unexpected losses can severely interrupt your growing operation. Even with the best preparations, it may be

difficult to resume shipping or filling your customer's orders following a devastating loss. Business income or crop income coverage is an optional coverage that pays for lost profit and continuing necessary expenses when business operations are suspended. Ask your insurance agent about the availability of this coverage and when it would be applicable.

Natural disasters caused by Mother Nature are a part of life. The preparatory steps you take, a prompt response and effective communication will, however, help you recover quickly and successfully after an unanticipated loss. **GM**

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