Stormy Weather

Christian Brothers Risk Management Services Catastrophic Plan for Hurricanes

Storm seasons over the past couple of years have proven to be very active, affecting areas of the country that historically have been somewhat immune from the severity of damages like those sustained in recent outbreaks. However, Christian Brothers Risk Management Services (CBRMS) and the Risk Pooling Trust (RPT) were not taken by surprise over these named storms. A catastrophic (CAT) plan put into place by CBRMS diminishes the element of surprise and employs measures to address damages resulting from these monumental, weather-related occurrences.

A CAT Plan addresses weather-related events as they relate to named storms and is a practical plan for implementing the measures necessary to manage and mitigate the effects of a catastrophic storm. There are five basic steps in the CBRMS CAT Plan:

1. Anticipation/Weather Forecasting
2. Preparation/Providing Advance Notification
3. Post Occurrence Consultation/Claim Reporting Assistance
4. Deployment of Vendors to Scope, Assess and Effect Necessary Repairs
5. Apply Safety Measures to Abate Future Losses

Anticipation/Weather Forecasting and Preparation/Providing Advance Notification

We are all familiar with the old adage most things in life are as predictable as the weather. However, with today’s technology, weather-related events are much more accurately predictable. CBRMS partners with brokerage services to gain access to state-of-the-art meteorology forecasting, allowing an active estimate for those areas of the country most susceptible to a named storm event. Once a storm event has been named, it triggers steps one and two in the CBRMS CAT Plan. After identifying all member organizations that are in harm’s way of the named storm, the account management and claims management departments combine their efforts to call each identified member well before the storm hits, to offer consultation with regard to claim reporting access, availability and mitigation initiatives that may be employed to minimize the effects of storm related damage.

Post Occurrence Consultation/Claim Reporting Assistance

In the aftermath of a major weather event, CBRMS, in conjunction with our claims administrator, Gallagher Bassett Services, Inc., provide post-storm assistance with claim reporting. This includes consultations on what can be reasonably expected in terms of restoring damaged property and efforts that can be employed to sustain business operations. Mercy Center at Madison in Connecticut (By The Sea, pages 14 – 17) has experienced more than their share of hurricanes. The Center sits on beachfront property on Long Island Sound, and over the last three years experienced Hurricane Irene, Superstorm Sandy and Tropical Storm Andrea. Charles Frey, executive director of Mercy Center at Madison, sums up the reporting process, “The response is always quick and everyone with whom I’ve been in contact has helped to keep us calm and steadfast in moving forward and returning to normalcy. They’ve assured us that they’d do whatever they needed to do to get us back to normal as soon as possible. And in fact, they have.”

Deployment of Vendors to Scope, Assess and Effect Necessary Repairs

Critical to achieving maximum effectiveness is CBRMS’s association with two other national business partners, RGA Services, Inc., our general adjusting firm, and BELFOR, our preferred vendor for restoration services. RGA Services, Inc. coordinates their efforts with BELFOR to assure teams of construction experts are ready to enter the areas of devastation at the earliest opportunity so they can begin the emergency repairs necessary to mitigate damages, as well as provide support to restore business operations. Many of our member organizations provide critical support to the communities they serve and restoring their ability to provide services is of paramount importance. Our vendors, along with Christian Brothers Services personnel, perform a type of triage to assure needs are being addressed on the basis of proper priority. As experienced after Superstorm Sandy, there may be delays imposed by civil authorities that are simply unavoidable. Our goal remains to be active and aggressive in pressing civil authorities to allow our vendors to send their staff into the areas most affected to begin the process of assisting our member organizations in recovering from the loss. Frey agrees, “Within days they were on-site, assessing the damages and also looking to see if there wasn’t anything else that could be done to lessen the damages, for example, getting dehumidifiers in the building so that the mold wouldn’t grow so quickly.”

The effectiveness of our CAT plan, which has been in place for many years, has been tested time and again with storms dating back to Katrina, Ike, Gustav, Isaac, Irene, Tropical Storm Lee and most recently, Superstorm Sandy and Tropical Storm Andrea, where the damages sustained in these storms were all addressed with the utmost expediency. In fact, in many instances, our member organizations’ properties were among the first to reopen their doors and resume their ministries and missions. This, in our estimation, is the true measure of a successful CAT program. “It’s been my experience with CBRMS,” relates Frey, “that it wasn’t about a company protecting its assets, but it was really about getting the ministry up, our ministry, up and running as quickly as possible so that our business was not interrupted.”

Serving non-profit organizations, we have a fiduciary responsibility to our membership as a whole, to manage expenses and costs associated with repairs to storm-related damages. Cost containment measures are prudent in the overall management of storm-related losses. Employing competent vendors, with a proven history of performance, in our opinion, is the most crucial factor in containing the cost of storm-related damages.

Apply Safety Measures to Abate Future Losses

Finally, we like to learn from our experiences. It is said, and we firmly believe, more can be learned from catastrophic events and failures than from successes. To that end, we employ our internal risk control specialists to scope, evaluate and develop plans that can be shared with all members in managing their assets and functionalities prior, during and subsequent to a catastrophic event. All of this in an effort to be prepared for any future weather episode that may threaten the safety and well-being of our membership.

Although no one can control the weather, we believe employing these strategic initiatives will have a mitigating effect on the severity of damages resulting from Mother Nature’s temperamental behavior. Our hope is that no one reading this article is confronted by such an event.

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