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Water Damage Prevention and Control

A little water goes a long way when damaging your construction project. Water damage claims routinely exceed \$100,000. These losses are preventable using some low-cost and easily applied controls.

- Do a daily water leakage inspection on the job site at the end of each day. Observe for open or leaking hoses, leaks from newly installed equipment, exterior openings that are not weather tight.
- Mark shut off valves with high-visibility tags to allow them to be easily located. Make sure that valves are not obstructed by material storage or staging. Time lost in looking for a valve escalates the eventual cost of the claim.
- Make sure that the security officers who patrol the site after hours know how to shut off the water. Water damage claims occur more often than fire, but we rarely address this as a training topic for our security officers. Make sure this is part of the emergency instructions and plans.
- Consider the use of water detection alarms for critical areas of the project—computer rooms, telephone exchanges, electrical vaults. These alarms are low cost and can be moved from job to job.
- Consider using green board in gypsum wall shafts. Shafts often are default drains for leaks. The use of green board will reduce the damage potential in these vulnerable areas at minimal additional cost.
- Toe boards that are closely fitted to the floor around openings, elevator shafts and other vertical openings can reduce the water damage to lower levels.
- Keep a water spill kit with absorbent socks or pigs available to contain and control a spill. Keeping the water on one level of the building will dramatically reduce your loss potential.
- Plan for cold weather. Maintaining heating and securing openings to prevent cold air infiltration will help prevent freeze losses.
- Make it a practice to shut down non-essential plumbing systems at the end of the day.
- Make water damage prevention a tool box topic for your site staff and subcontractors.

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