

Q1, March 2024

Severe Weather Preparation

As an experienced healthcare professional, I am excited to use my knowledge and expertise to support Mass-ALA. My goal is to work closely with business partners and senior care professionals to provide advocacy, education, and support. I most recently served as the Regional Quality Assurance, Memory Care, and Life Enrichment Director at Wingate Living, ensuring that residents received quality care. Prior to that, I held the position of Corporate Director of Dementia Program Management at Athena Healthcare Systems, where I was responsible for developing and implementing dementia care programs across multiple facilities. I am passionate about creating innovative curriculums, providing training assistance, and organizing and planning events that foster a sense of community and connection among senior care professionals. You can find the official announcement of my hiring [here](#).

Prepare Your Community for Severe Weather

Living in the Northeast region of the United States poses unique challenges due to the unpredictable weather patterns that are characteristic of the area. In particular, severe storms can arise suddenly, posing a significant risk to properties in the region. As such, it is crucial to implement measures year-round to safeguard your property from the effects of inclement weather.

However, in the event that a weather warning is issued, swift and effective action is necessary. In this regard, there are several quick and high-impact tasks that can be undertaken to prepare for the impending storm.

One of the key aspects of emergency preparedness for assisted living is coordination with MassMap. We are delighted to announce that Jim Garrow of MassMap will deliver a presentation at [Regulations Training on June 20, 2024. The event will be hosted at Holy Cross in Worcester, MA](#). Interested parties are encouraged to register for our Regulations Training by following the link provided.

Double Check Your Emergency Damage Plan

It is important to have a plan in place in case of weather-related damage to the community property. Your emergency damage plan should include details about your community insurance coverage, any unique risk factors, and a list of reliable emergency restoration companies that can help you clean up. You can refer to [Mass-ALA's business partner directory](#) to find service providers in your area of need.

Have your emergency survival kit ready.

It is imperative to have an emergency survival kit readily available in the community. This kit should consist of essential items such as potable water, non-perishable sustenance, flashlights equipped with additional batteries, a battery-operated radio, a standard first aid kit, and duplicates of crucial resident and business documents. The survival kit should be kept in a location that is easily accessible to save time in the event of an emergency. By having all of these items readily available, one can attend to other pressing matters before the storm or crisis situation arrives.

Maintaining Drainage Systems

Water damage constitutes a prevalent and costly problem in the Northeast. This issue arises due to various weather-related factors, such as flash floods and mold growth. Communities often incur significant expenses, amounting to thousands of dollars each year, when repairing water damage.

However, a straightforward solution to many of these leaks exists: monitoring the drainage systems. It is crucial to clean drainage systems regularly, at least twice a year. Furthermore, performing an additional cleaning sweep of these areas before a storm hits is advisable. This measure ensures optimal functioning of the drainage system, thereby preventing water accumulation in undesired areas.

Lock All Windows and Close Securely

In order to prevent water damage, it is imperative to ensure that all openings leading to the external environment are appropriately sealed. This can be achieved by implementing the following measures:

- Ensuring that windows are firmly closed and locked.
- Securing doors to prevent water seepage.
- Placing absorbent towels or fabrics in any draft spaces.

By adhering to these protocols, the risk of water damage can be significantly mitigated. It is recommended that these measures be implemented with regularity and attention to detail, particularly during periods of heavy precipitation or inclement weather.

Do A Quick Outside Sweep

When receiving notification of a severe storm, it is advisable to conduct an inspection of the property by venturing outside and surveying the vicinity. During the assessment, it is paramount to be vigilant for any issues that can be remedied expeditiously such as:

- Loose planters, outdoor furniture, umbrellas, or other objects that may transmute into hazardous airborne debris in times of high winds.
- Weak or diseased tree branches, particularly those in proximity to the property's windows.
- Fissures in the building's siding that can be expeditiously sealed using a can of foam.

Solid Communication Plan for Severe Weather

A comprehensive and adaptable severe weather communication plan is essential for efficient and clear communication during emergencies. The plan should identify key personnel responsible for issuing updates and directives and clarify their roles within the emergency response hierarchy. Staff and residents should be well-informed and versed in their specific duties and responsibilities. Regularly updating contact information, assessing past communications, integrating new technologies, and involving stakeholders in the review process can ensure that the plan remains robust, responsive, and capable of protecting the community in times of severe weather.

Stay Safe Inside and Assess Any Damage When the Storm Has

It is crucial to prioritize your safety during bad weather conditions. Ensure you are indoors and secure before a storm arrives, which could bring heavy rain, strong winds, and lightning. The focus should be on ensuring that you are safe and protected, rather than completing unfinished tasks. After the storm has passed, it is highly recommended that you inspect your property thoroughly for any damage. Walk around the perimeter of your property and document any irregularities, such as broken glass, missing roof shingles, damaged windows, dislocated doors, or window frames, fallen tree branches, or excess water pooling. If you notice any damage, it is important to contact a [restoration company promptly](#). They will be able to evaluate the damage, board up any broken windows or doors, and assist you in returning to your daily life as soon as possible.

In conclusion, being prepared for severe weather will keep you safe long after the severe weather has passed. Planning, prepping, training, and maintaining response actions will keep the community, staff, residents, and families safe and prepared.



Barbara Southall

Director of Education

781.622.5999 x103

BSouthall@mass-ala.org