

Water Damage: A Major Loss Source

Water intrusion sources, both external and internal, are a huge threat for any building owner, including residential homes, apartments and condominiums. This safety topic will provide advice for reducing your exposure to water damage issues.

Major sources of water leakage that can cause significant damage include:

- Washing machine water supply hoses
- Water supply lines feeding ice makers
- Hot water heaters
- Dishwashers

Other examples of building water intrusion sources include the following:

- Plumbing – piping and drains
- Plumbing fixtures – faucets, toilets, sinks, shower valves
- Equipment – garbage disposals, sump pumps
- Mechanical systems – heaters, air handlers, evaporators, chillers, pumps, tanks, boilers, refrigerant lines
- Fire Sprinklers – piping, sprinkler heads, control boxes, stand pipes
- Damaged roofing materials or other building materials
- Clogged roof drains or gutters

Building owners and condominium boards should consider a prevention plan that can significantly reduce water damage potential. First steps should include:

- Replace washing machine hoses with steel braided hoses that can reduce water “bursts”.
- Replace the water line for ice makers with reinforced stainless steel flexible lines.
- Inspect around your dishwasher and around the hose connection for signs of leaks. Make sure power is off before inspecting, or call a plumber if you suspect a problem.
- Make sure water shut off valves are accessible and work. Consider installing quarter turn shut off valves.
- Replace any hot water heater than is greater than 10 years old.
- Regularly clear roof drains and gutters to prevent clogging, especially before the rainy seasons. Consider installing gutter screens to help prevent leaves and debris clogging the gutters.
- Encourage residents to shut off the water to their units when leaving for extended periods.

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How Can You Prevent It?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Make sure pipes are insulated where required and never located in exterior walls where freezing is possible.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Perform regular building/HVAC inspections and maintenance as scheduled.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Keep heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) drip pans clean, flowing properly, and unobstructed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inspect all plumbing connections and fittings for signs of leaks and/or corrosion.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make sure fire sprinkler systems are professionally maintained and tested.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Be prepared for power failure and weather Issues. In the event of a power failure, a backup generator or alternate power source should be able to keep any sump pumps operating properly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make sure gutters are sloped away from the building for proper drainage.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Test your water pressure. Water pressure shouldn't exceed 80 psi. If it does, water pressure regulators should be installed by a licensed contractor who follows the local building code specifications.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have plans in place and easily accessible to respond promptly to water damage. These should include emergency contact information such as emergency contractors, police and electricians.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Immediately take corrective action when stained or softening walls or ceilings are noticed as this may indicate a water intrusion problem.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If it is determined that a water intrusion problem exists, engage a qualified professional to evaluate the damage and determine if the building is suitable for continued occupancy. Make sure all problems are corrected before the building is occupied.

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