



Water Damage!

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I realize the upper-half of Wisconsin is still experiencing a drought – and in some areas – it's quite severe. Floods and water damage may be the furthest thing from your mind at the moment! However, water damage is often the #1 cause of property loss claims, and frequently is not the result of heavy rainfall or other, weather-related events. The damage most often comes from broken pipes, hoses and valves, and as can be expected – it commonly occurs when no one is around to notice the problem. Water cascading down a staircase at 6 a.m. is not a great way to start the day!

As temperatures begin to fall (which reminds us that winter is just around the corner) – what preventive steps need to be taken to reduce the risk of water damage on campus?

- Are all water shutoff valves clearly identified? Are their whereabouts known by all facilities / maintenance staff (don't forget the 'new hires' or 'on call' employees)?
- Have the valves been exercised so they work properly?
- Are special tools required to turn off the valves (i.e., "Buffalo Boxes") – again, do staff know of their locations?
- Are new water lines protected from freezing temperatures? Don't forget fire sprinkler systems!

A frozen pipe this past February at a local high school cost over \$38,000 in drywall, ceiling tile and carpet damages. This was the result of the 'uni-vent' coils freezing up on an HVAC system, causing the leak. The unit had been turned off as the classroom was not being used that semester, and had been 'forgotten' until the water poured under the door...

An even more common water damage source is the water supply hoses for washing machines – which are found in Cosmetology and Food Service labs, along with Day Care centers and other varied locations around campus. Are the supply valves shut off when the washer is not being used? Have the water-supply hoses been replaced / upgraded lately? The newer style of hoses has a much improved, burst-resistant construction – these hoses are usually of a braided stainless-steel, are kink-resistant, and have a burst-strength of 2,000 psi – and only cost about \$10 each! Cheap risk management (buy them for your home as well)!

Now is the time to start looking at what can be done pro-actively on campus to prevent water damage! Don't wait for the flood waters to arrive!