

## How small businesses can protect their floors and technology this winter



### Tips and tricks for facility and IT managers to battle the cold conditions

(ARA) - Snow, ice, wind and cold temperatures bring a host of problems that facility and IT managers must plan and prepare for ahead of the winter season. Not only do they need to consider the damaging effects that salt and sand have on flooring, but they should prepare for potential power outages that could impact their technology infrastructure.

Here are some proactive tips to stay ahead of the harsh impact of winter from Staples, a source of safety supplies for small businesses.

- \* Prevent slips and falls. This is the most common losses I see come through Matrix as I write business insurance and request loss runs. One of the biggest concerns in winter for building occupants is falling on icy walkways. Deicers keep snow from sticking to the ground and increase the surface temperature enough to prevent ice from forming. Apply these in anticipation of each storm to keep people safe from injury.

- \* Protect surface areas - inside and out. Consider the impact deicing agents may have on walkways, carpeting, floors and even the plants around the building. Careful use of ice melt products can minimize damage to these surfaces. Also, consider installing quality, absorbent floor mats to help keep ice melt residue from being tracked into the building.

- \* Evaluate winter maintenance costs. The salt and urea-based ice melt products available range in effectiveness and cost. Take for example rock salt, which is the most common and the least expensive. However, it can be slow to help ice melt and harmful to vegetation alongside walkways. Make product effectiveness your primary consideration, since labor is the biggest cost of winter maintenance. Factor in product availability and disposal costs and order winter maintenance products well in advance to ensure best selection and price.

While cleaning and floor maintenance is an important and key aspect of winter preparation, don't forget to protect your technology investments.

- \* Guard your technology and data. Winter weather can result in costly power outages due to ice and wind. It is critical to back-up all company and client data daily, either onsite or through a hosted, off-site cloud service. Cloud services include benefits such as speedier recovery times, resulting in improved business continuity and revenue. They also offer decreased energy consumption while reducing the amount of space that is required to house storage servers. In addition, always check to make sure your back-up system is working properly before a storm hits.

- \* Avoid electrical shut downs. If you are at the office when an outage occurs, turn off all computers and other equipment as a precaution against the sudden increase in voltage when power is restored. In those instances when no one is present, it is key to ensure all computers and electrical equipment are connected to surge protectors, which act as a power strip, but absorb excess electrical energy and prevent it from reaching connected equipment. Determine if your office requires individual surge protectors or a large building surge protector with battery back-up. For data centers, it is recommended to use an uninterruptible power supply (UPS). UPS units prevent a power shut-down that could cause business disruption or data loss, and also help to maintain the proper temperature and moisture control that is critical for data centers to operate efficiently.

- \* Review telecommuting protocol. In case employees are unable to safely get to work during or after a storm, make sure they are able to connect with the office remotely. Arm people with log-in instructions and protocol and suggest they test it out before the storm hits. Consider implementing a telecommuting program with technology and furniture solutions for employees in advance of the winter season.