



## DISASTER KNOW-HOW

### HURRICANE CHECK LIST

These precautions should be a component of your disaster program to minimize your risk to damages from a severe storm:

- Protect vital records by relocating, backing up or duplicating files and records offsite.
- Cover computers, machinery and other perishable materials securely with waterproof coverings.
- Move materials and stock off of floors or remove to a remote location.
- Place hurricane shutters or plywood over windows and doors, and sand bag grade level windows and openings.
- Padlock overhead doors securely in place.
- Check all automatic sprinkler system valves and pumps.
- Check and fill all emergency generator fuel tanks.
- Check and fill all fuel tanks for fire pumps and vehicles.
- Anchor outside material that could become airborne during the storm or move it inside the building and secure it.
- Anchor all outbuildings, sheds and other structures.
- Shut down operations that depend on outside power sources.
- Inspect roof drains and make emergency repairs if needed.
- Check roof-mounted HVAC units and vents to make sure they are secure.
- Shut down all non-essential electrical equipment.
- Shut off gas to buildings.
- Prepare and fill above ground tanks with product or water.
- Shut off any equipment with flames.
- Clean out catch basins.
- Isolate chemicals that can react if mixed.

### TOP THREE HURRICANE PROTECTION MYTHS

Gearing up for hurricane season can often mean well-intentioned friends and relatives will provide you with their own tips and advice. The Institute for Business & Home Safety identified the top three hurricane myths to help residents in vulnerable states avoid some potentially dangerous ideas.

#### 1. Open the windows so the air pressure doesn't cause the house to explode

This would not only be unsafe for you and your home, but it would also allow wind-driven rain to stream through your house and ruin belongings. The normal leakage of air around windows and doors will tend to keep the pressure in your house slightly lower than the atmospheric pressure caused by the storm outside. The greatest danger comes when a large window or door fails on a wall facing the wind. The key is keeping all wind and water out with proper opening protection.

#### 2. You only need to protect the openings facing the ocean or gulf

Because hurricanes are a moving, rotating storm, winds can come from any direction, which can change rapidly if you are near the eye. Your best bet is to protect windows and doors on all sides of your home.

#### 3. You should tape windows with a big "X".

Taping glass does nothing to address the main point of protection - keeping the glass in its frame and securely attached to the home. Remember - never lean or push against a window or door that is being blown inward by wind pressure. And no matter what kind of glass you have, stay away from all windows during a severe storm.

## WHAT TO DO DURING A TORNADO

If you are under a tornado WARNING, seek shelter immediately!

If you are in:	Then:
A structure	Go to a pre-designated shelter area such as a safe room, basement, storm cellar, or the lowest building level. If there is no basement, go to the center of an interior room on the lowest level away from corners, windows, doors, and outside walls.
A vehicle, trailer or mobile home	Get out immediately and go to the lowest floor of a sturdy, nearby building or a storm shelter.
The outside with no shelter	Lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands. Do not get under an overpass or bridge. Never try to outrun a tornado in urban or congested areas in a car or truck. Watch out for flying debris - flying debris causes most fatalities and injuries.

## PROPERTY OWNERS WHO HIRE CONTRACTOR(S)

A property owner who hires general contractors, engineers, architects, surveyors, trade contractors or even a one man artisan contractor to build new buildings, renovate or remodel exterior or interior of buildings, or who simply hire contractors for general maintenance and upkeep, are potentially exposed to lawsuits claiming severe bodily injury and/or property damage losses resulting from unsafe work acts or faulty workmanship by their contractors.

In view of this, a property owner should implement contract provisions to protect their business or personal assets and to preserve their rights to transfer the risk of loss to the contractors that they hire.

A property owner should always have a signed, written construction contract or a written service and maintenance work contract with any of their contractors before work begins. A contract should have a legally enforceable indemnification agreement. The legality and enforceability

of provisions requiring contractors to indemnify the property owner in case of loss vary from state to state and legal counsel can advise on what language is appropriate.

In addition, there is a critical need for the property owner to use contracts that contain language requiring contractors to purchase liability insurance for the benefit of the property owner.

*Courtesy of Peerless Insurance*

## GUARDING AGAINST HOME LIABILITY EXPOSURES

### Yard Sales

It's Summer time and the yard sale season has begun. What can be the perfect way to de-clutter your home and make some cash at the same time can also expose you to trouble if a visitor gets hurt on your lawn and decides to sue.

Before you have a yard sale at your home, make sure your liability limits are high enough to protect you. There is also no-fault medical coverage on a standard homeowners or renters policy that pays an injured party's medical bills without them having to sue.

In addition to checking insurance coverage, you should plan the sale with safety in mind:

- Repair loose railings and cracked concrete which may cause injuries.
- Place sale items so that there is enough space to move without tripping.
- Avoid placing items too close to stairs and ledges where people could fall.
- Do not sell items that you know are unsafe or hazardous.

### Dog Bites

According to the Insurance Information Institute (III), dog bites accounted for more than one-third of all homeowners insurance liability claims paid out in 2009, costing \$412 million and up 6.4% from 2008. The average cost of a dog bite claim was \$24,840.

Massachusetts General Laws consider the owner or keeper of a dog "strictly liable"

for any damages incurred by the victim of a dog bite. The only exceptions to this rule is if the victim was trespassing, tormenting or abusing the dog, or was in the process of committing a crime. A child under the age of 7 is presumed to have done none of the above. In cases where the dog is owned or kept by a minor, the child's parents or legal guardians will be held liable for damages.

To reduce the chances of a dog biting someone, the following steps are recommended by the CDC:

- Consult with a professional to learn about suitable breeds of dogs for your household.
- Spend time with the dog before buying or adopting it. Dogs with histories of aggression are inappropriate in households with children.
- Never leave infants or young children alone with any dog.
- Have your dog spayed or neutered.
- Socialize your dog so it knows how to act with other people and animals.
- Discourage children from disturbing a dog that is eating or sleeping.
- Play non-aggressive games with your dog.
- Avoid exposing your dog to new situations in which you are unsure of its response.
- Never approach a strange dog and avoid eye contact with a dog that appears threatening.

## New Team Members



**Jada Duarte** - Appointed to the position of Account Manager in the Personal Lines Dept., Jada is a Certified

Insurance Service Representative with 10 years of insurance experience. She will serve as a trusted advisor to new and existing personal lines clients.



**Stephen Mitchell** - Joining the agency as Business Development Exec., Stephen brought with him over 16 years of financial

services industry experience, most recently working as a VP at Merrill Lynch Wealth Management Banking at Bank of America. He will be partnering with Agency Account Executives to deepen current client relationships and develop new client relationships for the company.



**Lauren Pimental** - Lauren joins the agency as an Account Manager in the Personal Lines dept., responsible for

coordinating services for the Pinnacle Program. Her prior experience includes both banking and hotel events coordination at a major Boston hotel.

## KEEPING PACE WITH YOUR BUSINESS

Has your employee benefits program kept pace with the evolution of your business? In today's business environment, new businesses are faced with a need to purchase employee health insurance almost immediately when they open for business. While the business owner may have several months of COBRA coverage from a prior employer, having a health plan in place is critical to the efforts to bring talented employees into the organization.

As a result, a group plan is sometimes implemented with an informal personnel policy to contribute toward the cost. In fact, it is typical that a business will agree to include health insurance as part of the applicant's proposed salary and compensation package. As the business grows, there may be inconsistencies in personnel policies due to individual employment contracts.

Moreover, there is often no one looking at the needs of the business in formulating a longer term strategy for business growth

and operations. And health insurance costs, which have historically increased at a much higher rate of inflation than COI, result in unintended and inequitable increases in participating employees' compensation.

Federal health care reform mandates employers to meet non-discrimination requirements in their employee health plan. The pending enforcement of the non-discrimination rules will undoubtedly force employers to review their personnel practices as the implementation of federal health care reform takes hold.

If you do not already have one, now is the opportune time to create a strategy for employee benefits for your firm. Not only will this solidify your personnel policies regarding benefits, but it will provide important budgetary considerations for what the longer range costs will be and allow for the development of a comprehensive competitive benefits program.

## Non-Profit Profile

### *New Bedford Symphony Orchestra*

Founded in 1915, the mission of the NBSO is to place the world's finest music at the center of the cultural life of the South Coast community. The NBSO enriches the lives of adults and children through the transforming power of great music, performing concerts at the right level of professional standards and providing educational programs for children and listeners of all ages that deepen their enjoyment and understanding of music and make it a part of their daily lives.

The 2011-2012 season opens in September and a listing of concerts and events may be found online.

To purchase tickets or support the NBSO visit them at:

[www.nbsymphony.org](http://www.nbsymphony.org) or  
call 508-999-6276.

## RETIREMENT PLANNING VS. RETIREMENT INCOME PLANNING

Most people currently in the work force have spent at least some time thinking about, planning for, and saving for their retirement. As you approach or enter retirement, your mindset needs to begin to move from accumulating retirement savings to distribution. That is what retirement income planning is all about - understanding how much annual income you will need during your retirement years to support the lifestyle that you want, and positioning your assets to provide that income.

Up-front planning is important because the consequences of a bad decision can be severe. Draw too heavily on your savings and investments in the early years of your retirement and you run the risk of depleting your funds too quickly, leaving nothing for your later years.

The planning process begins with just a few simple questions.

### **What does retirement mean to you?**

What is it that you want and expect in retirement? Do you see yourself pursuing hobbies? Traveling? Do you plan on volunteering your time, taking the opportunity to go back to school, or perhaps starting a new career? Examine your expectations carefully; your retirement income plan is just a means to financially support the lifestyle that you want.

### **When do you want to retire?**

The age at which you begin relying on retirement income can have a significant impact on your overall financial situation, so you will want to make sure that you have considered your decision from every angle. As you will see, there are many factors to consider.

### **How long will your retirement last?**

The good news is that, statistically, you are going to live for a long time. That is

also the bad news, though, because that means your retirement income plan has to be able to provide for your needs over - potentially - a very long period of time.

How long? The average 65-year-old American can expect to live for approximately 19 additional years. (Source: *National Vital Statistics Reports, Volume 58, Number 19, May 2010*). Keep in mind that life expectancy has increased at a steady pace over the years and is likely to continue to do so.

The bottom line: you may want to plan for retirement income to last 25 years or more.

*For help putting together your retirement income plan, call Sylvia Financial at 508-995-4080.*



## KEEPING YOU INFORMED: UPCOMING WEBINARS

### Webinars

Please watch for email notices for our upcoming webinars and seminars. We will be presenting a multi-webinar series this Fall on **The Family Business**. Passing your business on to the next generation of owners requires careful planning. We will discuss what you should consider in planning for the perpetuation of your business as well as your retirement.

If you are not already on our email list, please send us your email address so you may start receiving our email newsletters and event notices. You may email Kristine at [karsenault@sylviainsurance.com](mailto:karsenault@sylviainsurance.com).

*If you would like more information or are interested in signing up for any of our upcoming webinars and/or seminar, please give Kristine Arsenault a call at (508) 742-9247*

### If You Missed Our Most Recent Webinars...

#### ***Will Your Insurance Travel With You?***

Presented by John Beauregard and Rose Soares

#### ***Retirement Income Planning***

*Planning for a Financially Successful Retirement*

Presented by Nick Petronelli

You may find them on our website at

[www.sylviainsurance.com](http://www.sylviainsurance.com)

## SYLVIA GROUP ONLINE

### UPDATED WEBSITE

We are pleased to introduce our recently updated website which can be found at

[www.sylviainsurance.com](http://www.sylviainsurance.com).

The new site allows us to update readers regularly on changes within the insurance industry, news that may impact their insurance or financial services, and news about the agency. You will find more information that may be of interest to you, as well as links to the webinars we offer so you can receive the information you may have missed.

*If there is something you would like to see on our site that is not already there, please let us know.*

### FIND US ON FACEBOOK

Our new Facebook page also allows us to regularly update you on changes within the insurance industry, news that may impact your insurance or financial services, and news about our agency including updates on companies we represent, involvement in the insurance industry, and our support of and involvement in many community events.

Please visit our Facebook page and “Like” us to receive our posts.



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